

inaugurating the era of modern navigation. Although the ship was honoured with a postage stamp in 1933 on the centenary of its crossing, the *Royal William* has, unfortunately, been generally ignored. Marcil's book may go some way in increasing the profile of this significant vessel.

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**Edward J. Marolda and Adam Tooby (illustrator). *US Seventh Fleet, Vietnam 1964-1975: American naval power in Southeast Asia*. Oxford, UK: Bloomsbury/Osprey, [www.ospreypublishing.com](http://www.ospreypublishing.com), 2023. 80 pp., illustrations, maps, tables, diagrams, reading list, index. US \$23.00, CDA \$31.00, GBP £15.99; ISBN 978-1-4728-5681-4 (soft); ISBN 978-1-4728-5680-7 (eBook); ISBN 978-1-4728-5682-1 (PDF).**

The American war in Vietnam has typically been seen as land and air campaigns fought in and above the jungle and in river deltas and riverine estuaries. The participation of the US Seventh Fleet in this undeclared war following the Gulf of Tonkin resolution increased measurably in line with the number of American combat troops sent to Vietnam. Vietnam army veteran Edward Marolda, a retired senior historian from the US Navy and published expert on the US Navy's role in the Vietnam War, pens number four of Osprey's new Fleet series, focused on the Seventh Fleet in the Vietnam conflict from the commitment of US forces in 1964 to final withdrawal in 1975. Adam Tooby, a digital artist and illustrator known for his drawing of planes and aviation, provides original commissioned artwork.

The slim book follows the series standard format of 80 pages in length with four unnumbered sections or chapters explaining the fleet's purpose, its composition and fighting power, the doctrine and operational functions governing the fleet, and the overall combat record and operations during the conflict. Photographs are captioned and shaded text boxes provide further information and commentary accompanying the text and artwork. A map/timeline covers the entire period from 1964 to 1975 with chronologically numbered placement of significant and prominent events. Three-dimensional diagrams and plots in colour show the logistic support given to the fleet from the surrounding region and the dispositions and formations of the fleet related to specific functions and for specific named operations. A list for further reading, which includes six publications by Marolda, and a basic index appear at the end like other books in the series.

The US Seventh Fleet dated from the Second World in General Douglas MacArthur's South-West Pacific area command, but shifted from Cold War

deterrence to the projection of combat power from the sea off the coasts of Vietnam and adjoining areas. The US Navy went looking for trouble in the Gulf of Tonkin, which President Lyndon Johnson used as a pretext for a Congressional resolution authorizing a dramatic escalation of the American presence in Indochina to defend against Communist intrusion and takeover. A hot war ensued as the Americans launched tit-for-tat air strikes against targets in North Vietnam in retribution for attacks in the south and became engaged in ground fighting with ever increasing frequency. The administration also started Operation ROLLING THUNDER, an attempt to interdict inward supply routes using targeted bombing and further attempts to stop seaborne infiltration.

Naval aviation (Task Force 77) was the centrepiece around which the Seventh Fleet was built; it was made up of post-war oil-powered supercarriers and newer nuclear carriers carrying jet and propellor attack, reconnaissance, and electronic countermeasure aircraft, as well as search and rescue helicopters. Cruisers, destroyers, and escorts protected the valuable carriers with screens and also engaged in shore bombardment missions with guns and missiles. The fleet had an organic amphibious capability (Task Force 76) which was able to employ, lift, land, and support marines in a few major operations and numerous raids and sweeps. Logistics in the Seventh Fleet (Task Force 73) consisted of replenishment at sea by a service squadron equipped with newly designed ships and continually evolving techniques. Thus, the Seventh Fleet operated almost continuously at sea with most of its needs met through underway replenishment. Individual ships returned to shore bases in the Philippines and Japan for major repairs, refits, and bulk personnel shore leave.

Marolda notes that command and control of the Seventh Fleet was hampered for much of the period because of the propensity of the White House, presidential staff, and Secretary of Defense to intercede in planning and conduct of operations to prevent the conflict in Vietnam from escalating into a wider war with China or the Soviet Union. American military commanders worked under severe restrictions and limitations on what could be done until President Richard Nixon arrived on the scene. The Seventh Fleet positioned itself in several stations or staging areas off Vietnam's coast to launch air strikes against land targets and support American and South Vietnamese ground forces fighting the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese Army. The US Navy's aircraft came up against North Vietnamese MIG fighters as well as ground-deployed anti-aircraft guns, light arms fire, and surface-to-air missile batteries supplied by the Soviets and Chinese. Those defences downed many American aircraft, and considerable effort was made to recover pilots and crews before they were discovered, captured, or killed. The enemy came to know this operating procedure and set ambushes and traps to catch the rescue

parties unaware and destroy more aircraft.

Especially after the 1968 Tet Offensive, the focus of the Seventh Fleet's air sorties was increasingly on targeting supply and movement along the Ho Chi Minh Trail and interdiction of coastal traffic bringing supplies by sea in small ships and trawlers. Neither side appeared to obtain an advantage while, in the face of mounting domestic opposition to the war, the Nixon administration planned to set conditions for the withdrawal of US military forces from Vietnam. Faced with a full-fledged invasion of South Vietnam in 1972 during the Nguyen Hue (Easter) offensive, a considerably augmented and bolstered Seventh Fleet held the line and renewed air strikes and sea bombardment against targets in North Vietnam. It mined the approaches to Haiphong and effectively closed that port to shipping. Tooby's artwork depicts a night action during Operation LION'S DEN when US surface ships engaged North Vietnamese torpedo boats off Haiphong.

Peace Accords in January 1973 led to the repatriation of American prisoners of war, commitments to clear or neutralize sea mines in Vietnamese waters, and finally the evacuation of the US embassy in Saigon and other friendly personnel by helicopter and boats. A good part of the Seventh Fleet departed for the Philippines while remaining units performed residual duties and responded to immediate crises, including the seizure of an American-flagged ship off Cambodia.

The *US Seventh Fleet in Vietnam* is another fine addition to Osprey's Fleet series authored by an acknowledged expert on the US Navy's part in that conflict. The book is a handy primer with pleasing graphic materials and illustrations to explain the significance of the fleet's deployment within a wider context. It is recommended for readers interested in the Vietnam War, naval operations involving power projection from the sea, naval aviation, and the United States Navy operating in green water littorals in the modern era.

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**John R McKay. *Arctic Convoy PQ18: 25 Days That Changed the Course of the War*. Barnsley, S. Yorks: Pen & Sword Maritime, [www.pen-and-sword.co.uk](http://www.pen-and-sword.co.uk), 2023. xxviii+174 pp., illustrations, glossary, maps, index. UK £22.00, US \$42.95, cloth; ISBN 978-1-39903-660-3.**

Although it ended almost eighty years ago, no one would argue that the memory of the Second World War is fading away, at least not in the field of history. John R McKay's book is an excellent work that brings back one of the most important moments in the war to modern readers.