

have seen more use of both the Australian and US official histories of the war. Nonetheless, this is a very good book and a great first read for anyone wishing to learn about this campaign, which is often over-shadowed by the better-known fighting at Guadalcanal, the Philippines, and the island-hopping fight northwards. This campaign *was* the turning point in the war in the Pacific as it stopped the Japanese southerly advance and put the Allied forces well and truly on the offensive.

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William S. Dudley. *Inside the US Navy of 1812-1815*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins Books on the War of 1812, www.jhupbooks.press, 2021. 352 pp., illustrations, maps, tables, notes, bibliography, index. US \$54.95, cloth; ISBN 978-1-42144-051-4.

In this critical new assessment, William Dudley, Director of the US Naval Historical Centre between 1995 and 2004 and founding editor of the essential *The Naval War of 1812: A Documentary History*, addresses the maritime dimension of a conflict that has long been at the centre of American naval identity, as visitors to the Naval Academy at Annapolis will have observed. Dudley shifts the focus of attention from combat to administration, from the high seas to Washington, DC, and the shore stations, coastal and lakeside, where ships were built, maintained, and equipped. The central figures are the three Secretaries of the Navy, Paul Hamilton, William Jones, and Benjamin Crowninshield, together with their small administrative staff, while shipwrights and naval architects are a critical resource. The US Navy did not enter the war with

the manpower, ships or bases necessary for a conflict with the global naval hegemon, while the money needed to expand the fleet remained in short supply throughout the war. Successive Democratic and Republican administrations under Thomas Jefferson and James Madison had failed to renew the sea-going fleet – no new frigates were built after 1800 – putting their faith in coastal defences and gunboats while cutting the budget. This policy left the United States without the power to influence British economic warfare policy – policy that had been critical to Britain’s war effort since 1803, when the Napoleonic conflict turned the Atlantic into the front line of a total war. By 1812, the American seagoing fleet was small and relatively old. Dudley’s examination of the supply of cannon and powder reveals the limits of American industrial production, and the significance of targeted British amphibious raiding in the Chesapeake, where an important cannon foundry was destroyed.

Despite long term under-funding and limited resources, the American Navy performed well in the War of 1812, far better than the American Army. US warships were worthy opponents, in contrast to those of the European powers. In 1812, naval victories boosted national morale; they secured the northern frontier in 1813 and 1814. On the open ocean, privateering, rather than naval cruiser warfare, took a heavy toll of British merchant shipping in 1812, but the introduction of an effective convoy system quickly reduced those losses, and increased the number of American sailors held as prisoners of war. In late 1814 there were 12,000 sailors in American naval service, 7,000 of them on the Lakes. At the same time 20,000 naval ratings and privateersmen were British prisoners of war, a striking figure that highlights the Royal Navy’s

success in securing the oceans. At the same time, the British blockade, which began in 1813, was hollowing out the American economy. Here Dudley exploits the latest British research, notably Brian Arthur's *How Britain Won the War of 1812* (reviewed *TNM* XXII, no. 2, April 2012), to qualify old mythologies.

Across the three campaign seasons the focal point of the naval effort steadily shifted from oceanic raiding to coast defence, and finally to the Great Lakes, where the bulk of American sailors were stationed by the autumn of 1814. Sailors, shipwrights, and cannon were shifted from the coast to the Lakes, initially to support a succession of failed invasions of Canada, and then to secure the American frontier against the British counter-attack. As Mahan observed, Lake Erie and Lake Champlain were the Navy's decisive battles, reflecting the reality of a conflict that ended with the economy in ruins, the capital destroyed, and parts of the country under British occupation. In contrast to operations on the ocean, the naval effort on the Lakes focused on moving and supplying armies. Command of the individual lakes enabled offensive operations; loss of command halted them. The victory on Lake Erie allowed American troops to cross into Canada, winning a key battle at the Thames: victory at Lake Champlain saw a British invasion abandoned. By denying the British command of Lakes Erie, Ontario, and Champlain the Navy helped stabilise the conflict, and encourage a *status quo ante* settlement.

Ironically, the War of 1812 ended because the downfall of Napoleon and a stabilisation of Europe allowed the British to demobilise the vast, costly warfare state after 21 years of almost continuous conflict. The peace they offered pointedly excluded any discus-

sion of "Free Trade and Sailors Rights," and the Madison administration, which had never cared for either issue, accepted. In essence, America chose the land over the sea. As Dudley concludes, the blockade worked: "had the war continued through another year, the United States might have had to sue for peace ... the country had a narrow escape" (293-4). The United States did not win the War, nor was 1812 a second war of independence, outside the propaganda of the Madison administration. British war aims remained strikingly modest throughout: Europe, not North America, was the critical point.

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José L. Bolívar Fresnada. *The Caribbean Front in World War II: The Untold Story of U-boats, Spies, and Economic Warfare*. Princeton, NJ: Markus Wiener Publishers, [www.markusweiner.com](http://www.markusweiner.com), 2021. 275 pp., illustrations, charts, notes, bibliography, index. US \$26.95, paper; ISBN 978-1-55876-955-7.

José L. Bolívar Fresnada, military historian and relative of two US Navy veterans, brings his considerable knowledge of Puerto Rican, American naval, and Caribbean history to bear in order to more fully share the unsung but pivotal Second World War struggle for the oil and ore supplies out of the Caribbean. Particularly with the *Neuland* (New Land) offensive in the spring of 1942, along with a flotilla of effective Italian attack submarines known as BetaSom from Bordeaux, the Germans under *Großadmiral* Karl Dönitz made a determined effort to sever the Allied lifeline of oil from Venezuela via the refineries in Aruba and Curacao, and also the ore and bauxite routes from northeastern South America. They very