

gain a basic appreciation; but for those wanting a more in depth analysis, they will have to look elsewhere.

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**Greg H. Williams. *The US Navy at Normandy: Fleet Organization and Operations in the D-Day Invasion*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland Publishing, [www.mcfarlandpub.com](http://www.mcfarlandpub.com), 2020. vi+437 pp., illustrations, appendix, glossary, notes, bibliography, index. US \$49.95, paper; ISBN 978-1-4766-8077-4. (E-book available.)**

This work is Williams' latest detailed Second World War naval compendium in which he seeks to document the American Navy's organization and actions during Operation Neptune, June 6-24, 1944. Utilizing official reports, ship histories, and unofficial personal recollections, Williams provides readers with a detailed understanding of not only the Normandy Landings, but the preparation, planning, and post-attack supply efforts as well. As with his earlier work, the detached nature of ship names and statistics is humanized with the inclusion of personal information on surviving crewmen, casualties, and fatalities in addition to first-hand accounts. The work is arranged in fifteen chapters, each with its own subsection, followed by a brief epilogue noting overall participation figures, a summary of one D-Day Navy fatality, and the auction of a D-Day-flown flag.

The initial eleven chapters cover the lead-up to Operation Neptune, the composition of the various units involved, and the assorted types of ships composing the formidable D-Day armada. This latter point is focused on the less glamorous vessels of the fleet, such as LCIs, LSTs, Rhino Ferries, or minesweepers, rather than the larger cruisers and battleships of the fleets. These early chapters provide excellent background information on the various events that preceded Neptune, including an accounting of the disastrous German E-Boat attack on the unprepared LSTs of Exercise Tiger. Western Task Force Command units, groups, and naval squadrons are broken down extremely well in chapter nine, with each unit having some form of summary information paired with ship names and commanding officers when available. As usual, Williams documents the crew casualties aboard various vessels listing name, rank, and home address. The next two chapters see a similar treatment given to the main assault forces, follow-up convoys, and American units assisting the British and Canadians in the eastern sectors to round out the extensive background information.

The documentation of D-Day itself takes place over the 85 pages of chapter thirteen, followed by 113 pages on the post D-Day actions of Neptune, including

the capture of the port of Cherbourg. Appreciably, the oft-neglected initial landing at Saint-Marcouf by troops aboard Task Unit 125.15.4 is covered early in this section, followed by transcribed accountings from the various vessels of the American fleet (210-211). The length of these transcriptions varies greatly depending on the sources, as does Williams' accompanying text, though all shed their own light on the activities usually relegated to the background of other D-Day and Normandy Campaign books or films. Post D-Day incidents with mines, glide bombs, and other attacks are well documented alongside casualty evacuations and supply offloading efforts. Williams' human touch extends from the listing of wounded or killed men to the account of a chief petty officer running back aboard the sinking USS *Meredith* to rescue "Larky ... our pet cat [the captain] never knew had been onboard" (316). The taking of Cherbourg and the preparatory bombardments carried out on the surrounding areas have their own small chapter, with this more purely combative action separated from the chronological narrative of the rest of Operation Neptune rather than being interwoven with the other landing-site-focused activities.

One improvement would be combining some extremely short chapters (between two and four pages in length) with adjacent chapters under already-existing subheadings for smoother reading. While there are useful images of vessels and offloading tactics, there are, surprisingly, no maps of the invasion beach sectors and task force assignment areas. Maps would help illustrate the position and relationship between naval vessels at various key points in the D-Day operation, or even earlier, such as the attack on Exercise Tiger on 28 April 1944 or the transatlantic crossing of Task Force 67 in March of the same year. Footnotes or endnotes would be appreciated and, as with his earlier work on the Asiatic Fleet, there is no definite conclusion. Rather than the current two anecdotes in the epilogue, some overall analysis of the Navy's effectiveness during Neptune, perhaps even a comparison with landing operations in the Pacific Theatre would be useful.

*The US Navy at Normandy* is an admirable addition to the historiography of Operation Neptune and the D-Day Campaign as a whole. Williams offers a unique compilation of first-hand accounts and official reports to allow a sea level view of the invasion of western France in what was a complex and arduous undertaking, the fruit of which is an excellent resource for scholars, historians, and those interested in naval personnel wounded or killed during the operation. Williams' adherence to the placing of names and personal details alongside ships and events personalizes an often analytical or tangentially mentioned subject, preserving the raw human cost of one part of the liberation of Europe amid a fine chronicling of the logistical headache that was D-Day and its aftermath.

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