

broad backs and stamina of thousands of ill-nourished, poorly clothed, usually unpaid and overworked Papuans and New Guineans. These were normally conscripted in a fairly ruthless process that ANGAU was only slowly able to ameliorate as the emergency diminished.

Powell suggests that this labour conscription was unfair if only because the people of Papua New Guinea owed little or no loyalty to Australia. That may be but it can also be said that Australia owed an obligation of just treatment to the people of Papua New Guinea and that defeating the Japanese was the best way to achieve that objective. Indeed, this is the strongest argument for the late war operations in the northwest, New Britain and Bougainville, criticised by many as unnecessary and wasteful. Powell's discussion of the loyalty question is substantial and well balanced.

After the Japanese defeats in Papua, ANGAU steadily developed as a broad-based military government. Powell notes that the labour administration section always accounted for around half of ANGAU's total strength of 366 officers and 1660 other ranks, not including the 2700 strong police or the still larger indigenous labour force.

ANGAU was also responsible for such tasks as civil law enforcement, district administration, health services and coastal shipping. Many of the key personnel, especially in the District Services Branch, were former administration officials but, equally, many were drawn from volunteers sought from Army units.

The District Services personnel - the 'kiaps' - and their colleagues of the Royal Papuan Constabulary who best knew the country and its peoples were increasingly drawn into active military operations against the Japanese as advisers, scouts and guides. ANGAU was partly responsible for the administration of the alphabet soup of irregular units that operated in enemy-occupied territory. Indeed, many of the personnel were so interchangeable that some of my own superiors in post-war PNG freely admitted that they were never quite sure whom they worked for at any given time.

Powell describes a wide range of ANGAU operations as well as devoting two excellent chapters to ANGAU's people, one on the Australians and the other on the Papua New Guineans. He touches only briefly on the role of Colonel Alf Conlon's Directorate of Research and Civil Affairs, an organisation that played the principal role in establishing the comparatively radical post-war national policy for Papua New Guinea as a single entity. This is a pity but it may well have been considered outside the scope of his study. Nonetheless, the job was done largely by the Army under the benevolent direction of the Commander-in-Chief, General Blamey, often in spite of the traditional political indifference to Papua New Guinea. From the Army's perspective, this study of ANGAU reinforces the not well-understood view that ending the fighting does not guarantee the peace.

Professor Powell has given us an excellent and balanced study of a unit that was as well known as any to those who served in New Guinea but the scope of whose operations

was seriously under-estimated, both at the time and since. ♦

*Alan Powell, 'The Third Force: ANGAU's New Guinea War 1942-46', Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 2003, casebound and jacketed, 292pp, \$55.00.*

## D-Day: The Greatest Invasion— A People's History

**Dan Van Der Vat**

**Reviewed by Dr Malcolm Kennedy**

In the early hours of 6 June 1944, the gunfire from 700 warships signalled the arrival of a force of 5,000 ships, 8,000 aircraft, 130,000 men and 20,000 vehicles off the coast of France. The invasion of Nazi occupied Europe had begun. Operation Overlord, which took years in the planning and creating, was at last launched across the beaches of Normandy. Even with the massive military force brought to bear the lodgement hung in the balance. At the end of the first twenty-four hours—the 'longest day'—the fate of Western Europe had been tipped towards freedom.

Only the application of massive military, economic and logistical force was able to wage war sufficiently powerful to destroy the vile Nazi regime and bring peace to Europe once more. The stakes were enormous. This was a key turning point in world history.

If the invasion failed an unacceptable consequence would have been a long and increasingly bloody campaign through Italy into Germany; and if the German eastern armies collapsed, there was the highly probable advance of Stalin's dictatorial regime into Western Europe. This would have meant the replacement of one murderous tyranny with another. A failure on D-Day would have probably added another year to the war. Dan Van Der Vat has produced a magnificent tribute to the men and women who filled the widest imaginable roles in the preparation and execution of the invasion of Europe. This book revitalises our knowledge and understanding of D-Day and prepares us for the sixtieth anniversary of the day that changed the fate of millions of people.

The author has produced a well-written text, a superb collection of black and white and colour photographs, clear maps, paintings, interviews, an index, bibliography, and web sites, which make this book a fitting tribute to those who died and those who survived D-Day. For our part, we can respect and celebrate their sacrifice by reading and learning from this account.

It was a drama in which the elements of nature, sea, wind and sky, almost conspired to harm the passage of the great armada as much as the fierce resistance of the well-prepared and skilled German troops, who crouched behind their heavy defences protected by numerous ingenious devices prepared to kill or wound the invaders. Van Der Vat has provided the reader with a feast of new material, maps, diagrams, small and novel stories, accounts of ideas and equipment, deceptions, tricks and training, all of which were brought to bear to make

the landing, and holding of the beachheads, more likely. He notes the massive level of force and firepower, which was necessary to begin, establish and sustain the landings.

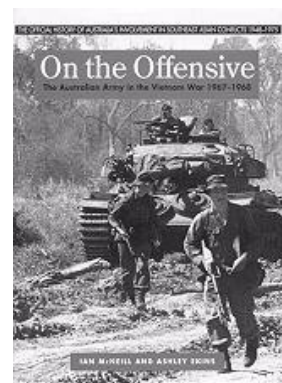
The account of the development of the Overlord gives us vital lesson of the difficulty and risk involved in opposed amphibious landings. These are lessons that ought not to be ignored as the ADF moves to develop a greater maritime operational capacity.

The disaster of the Dieppe Raid, a 'reconnaissance in force' in August 1942, was an object lesson on how an inadequately prepared invading force would be destroyed. Some 252 ships carried 6100 troops and 30 tanks across the channel to attack and hold the port of Dieppe. The engagement was a disaster. In a single day 4100 were killed, wounded, missing or captured compared to German losses of 314 killed, 294 wounded and 37 captured. The allies lost all the tanks, one destroyer, three landing craft and 99 aircraft compared to the German loss of 48 aircraft. This brutal lesson tempered the thinking of Lieutenant General Morgan, who took four months to prepare the first draft of Overlord. This plan was refined and fleshed out from July 1943 to its execution on D-Day in 1944. The essentials remained the same. A massive assault in Normandy followed by the rapid capture of major ports to facilitate the huge supply train needed to support the allied forces liberating France and advancing into Germany.

The apparent simplicity of Overlord was, as Van Der Vat, notes contrasted by the final details. Even though Admiral Ramsay, who carried out the Dunkirk operation, was put in charge of the naval planning, his demands for more and more shipping delayed D-Day. The naval operational orders eventually took up a thousand pages, detailing the deployment and operations of 1212 warships, over 4000 landing craft, and over 1500 ancillary support ships. The planning involved a curious range of lateral thinking activities. Concrete caissons some 255 foot long and weighing 6000 tonnes, called 'Mulberries' and scuttled block ships, called 'Gooseberries' were used to create artificial harbours. The Pipe Line Under The Ocean, or PLUTO, provided the tens of thousands of gallons of fuel consumed each day and removed the need for vulnerable tankers. Van Der Vat covers the important airborne landings, and refutes the nonsense, left in the minds of many people, by various films on D-Day. He shows that while there was occasional confusion, the operational control and application of the airborne forces was particularly effective in securing their objectives. The naval and air force attacks show that support of the landing was an especially complex operation, which demanded the very best of the skills of the crews and their commanders.

About a quarter of the text is devoted to the actual day of the landing, and this is a heart-stopping section of the narrative. It is a must read. The course of the invasion is followed to the breakout stage and the author ends his account with the Canadian Army liberating his home town in Holland. He notes that—'For my family and me, and for millions of Western Europeans, it was freedom — the gift of life itself.' ♦

Dan Van Der Vat, *'D-Day: The Greatest Invasion - A People's History'*, Allen&Unwin, Sydney, 2003, casebound and jacketed, 176pp, \$49.95.



## On the offensive: The Australian Army in the Vietnam War January 1967–June 1968

Ian McNeill and Ashley Ekins

Reviewed by John Essex-Clark

This clearly written and impressive book, the eighth volume in the *Official History of Australia's Involvement in Southeast Asian Conflicts 1948–1975*, follows on from *To Long Tan*, the account of the Army's involvement in Vietnam from 1950 to 1966.

This volume is well presented with quality paper, good maps and a balance of good colour and black and white photographs. Its writing has involved vast research by the authors and their teams. Unfortunately Ian McNeill, one of the two authors and a Vietnam veteran himself, died during the book's production. This obviously caused a heavy burden on the other, Ashley Ekins, especially as he did not have the advantage of McNeill's comprehensive and intimate knowledge of the personalities and operations involved, or of the ethos of the Army of that era.

As in any history based on coupling the memories of men with written records it contains areas of contention. It is, however, a masterpiece of writing about a war that had so many critics and numerous political twists and turns. The book describes well a war that appeared to have no easily identifiable strategic objective in Australia's national interest and whose rationale and prosecution was subject to much vilification in Australia. This account helps to clarify the quandary faced by politicians attempting to balance their perceptions of strategic interest against political reality, and also the military operational needs of the campaign concerned against the economic and political costs.

The volume accurately describes the differences between US and Australian methods of fighting the war and their differing political objectives; for example was the overall mission to defeat the communist forces or restore democracy and South Vietnamese government control? It also explains the dichotomy between those two missions and the cultural canyon between East and West. Rudyard Kipling was right when he said 'never the twain shall meet'. The discussions with former Viet Cong opponents and research into communist Vietnamese histories add much