

time we'll reach across the gulf to those we were fighting—with and against.

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The Marines Take Anbar: The Four-Year Fight Against Al Qaeda

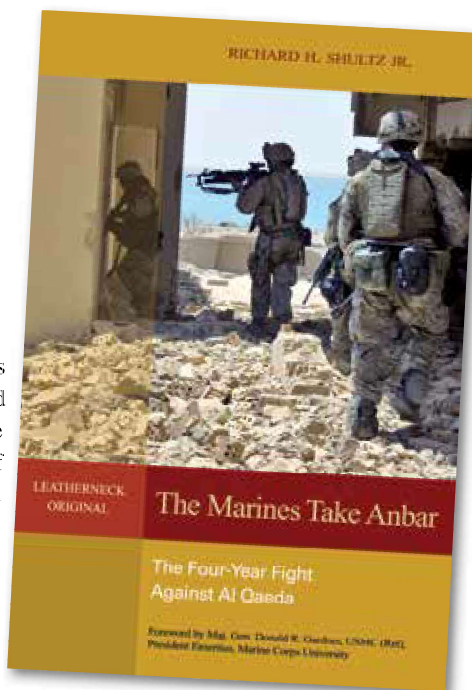
Richard H. Shultz Jr. Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2013. 288 pp. Illus. \$39.95.

Reviewed by Captain Nathaniel L. Moir, U.S. Army (Reserve)

With the elapse of time since operations in Iraq commenced in March 2003 and as combat veterans of that war retire or leave the service, the possibility of losing opportunities to learn from that conflict increases. *The Marines Take Anbar*, however, is a cogent and well-written stop-gap to that problem, and it enforces lessons learned from this complex period. Notably, this book is the result of a three-year research effort that was conducted in cooperation with the History Division of the U.S. Marine Corps. The author, a highly regarded professor of international politics at Tufts University's Fletcher School, presents his commendable work in a chronological sequence that focuses on the Marines' efforts in Anbar Province.

The opening chapter provides a cultural and historical context for the operating environment in which I Marine Expeditionary Force (I MEF) would find itself challenged. The next two chapters focus on 2003 and 2004 and detail how many of the problems encountered throughout Iraq were self-inflicted by poor policy formulation, such as the Coalition Provisional Authority's Orders 1 and 2. These two decisions, which initiated de-Ba'athification and disbanded the Iraqi Army, contributed greatly to the milieu that al Qaeda would exploit in 2005 and 2006. "Stalemate," the fifth chapter, focuses on the efforts of II MEF's concept of operations and how it began to implement counterinsurgency strategies. This chapter alone is a germane ground-level view for students seeking to gain a better understanding of what the Marine

Corps faced and how it adapted to the opportunities that the "Anbar Awakening" would present. Sahawat al-Anbar, the Anbar Awakening, also comes into focus during this chapter and in chapter six. They are then followed by a succinct



conclusion that details the overall Marine Corps effort in the province.

Schultz details how the contingency of al Qaeda in Iraq's (AQI) depredations against Iraqis coalesced with the Marine Corps' ability to partner with Iraqi Sunni tribes against al Qaeda. Together, these two factors largely contributed to the Marines' ability to implement a successful counterinsurgency strategy. While arguably few could have known how this would play out at the time, it is a testament to Marine leadership, particularly Generals Jim Mattis, Walter Gaskin, John Kelly, and John Allen, among others, who had the intuition and fortitude to capitalize on the opportunity. This was demonstrated through their willingness to incorporate Joint Special Operations Command personnel and other multipliers, as well as increased cultural awareness, into their efforts. Schultz delineates the Marines' skill to innovate and adapt, writing:

Several journalistic accounts have characterized the Sunni Awakening as a sudden flipping of the sheikhs from one side to the other. But what this

account has made clear is that just the opposite was the case. The Awakening was, in fact, an incredibly painful and bloody process that began at the end of 2005 and passed through two phases in 2006. The first was the ill-fated effort in the early winter months that was snuffed out by AQI. The second came in the summer. It took root because of the successful execution of I MEF's OPLAN, in particular the linking of tribal engagement with the methodical establishment of COPs [combat outpost] in the population centers of Anbar.

While readers at all levels of leadership may benefit from Schultz's work—along with civilians seeking to learn how the Marines adapted to dynamic conditions—the book is particularly well-suited for cadets, midshipmen, and university students more generally. Through the author's excellent use of historical archives and highly regarded accounts of efforts in Anbar, such as Timothy McWilliams, Kurtis Wheeler, and Gary Montgomery's *Al-Anbar Awakening*, students are provided a concise and very readable work that deservedly belongs at the center of courses on Operation Iraqi Freedom. Further, *The Marines Take Anbar* is a fine complement to other more tactically focused books on the subject such as Bing West's *No True Glory* or Patrick O'Donnell's *We Were One*.

A commendable element of Schultz's work is the professionalism of his inquiry into what was a very complex, tragic, and invariably difficult period of warfare. Unlike other pop-historians who churned out doomsday books while efforts in Anbar were still progressing, Schultz enables his readers to better recognize a more holistic perspective of a transformative endeavor. His work is also a call to civilian leadership for more informed and synchronized whole-of-government approaches to foreign policy. For those who execute such policy, *The Marines Take Anbar* is a portal into how the military may continue its transformation toward, it is hoped, even more effective practices as the 21st century unfolds.

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