



*Photo of an Australian Soldier reading during a break in operations during #ExHamel.  
Courtesy of the Australian Army*

By [Jim Greer](#)

After 15 years devoted to low intensity conflict in the form of counter-insurgency, counter-terrorism and foreign internal defense the U.S. military, and more specifically the U.S. Army, is now focused on restoring the lost capability to conduct mid-to-high intensity maneuver warfare. Restoring capabilities for maneuver warfare is only possible through the leader development, training and cultural adaptation that enables leaders, Soldiers and

organizations to think, plan, analyze, decide, communicate and act effectively in combat situations that are incredibly complex, conducted at extremely high tempos and far more lethal than the operations of the last fifteen years. Recognizing that future maneuver warfare will not be the same as that of the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, the following reading list is offered as a start point for those who wish to educate and prepare themselves to lead our Army in preparing for and if necessary conducting large-scale maneuver warfare in the future. Each of these books shaped my own thinking and understanding about maneuver warfare and enabled me to prepare leaders, Soldiers and units to plan and conduct successful combat operations employing maneuver warfare in Desert Storm and Operation Iraqi Freedom.

[\*Patterns of Conflict\*](#) by USAF Colonel John Boyd is I believe the best primer on how to think about maneuver warfare. Using a combination of theory, history and practice Boyd troop leads the reader to develop the thinking skills necessary for planning and conducting combat operations. Although best known for the OODA Loop, Boyd's contribution is much more. Regardless if you are a company commander, Brigade staff, or an instructor, *Patterns of Conflict* will shape the way you think about your role in warfighting. I was lucky enough to hear Colonel Boyd present *Patterns of Conflict* as a young captain. In his six-hour presentation he completely changed the way that I thought about warfare.

[\*Race to the Swift\*](#) by Brigadier Richard Simpkin (UK) is in my opinion the best theoretical analysis of maneuver warfare. Simpkin analyzes and connects the physical, mental and moral components of air/mechanized maneuver warfare for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Recognizing a total war clash of titans is unlikely, but that air/mechanized maneuver warfare in limited conflicts is likely, Simpkin offers insights into the conduct of campaigns, major operations and battles. Long a text at the U.S. Army's School of Advanced Military Studies, in many ways his work shaped the thinking for Desert Storm and Iraqi Freedom (the Phase III operations) in planning and execution. I personally reread *Race to the Swift* as a planner for

both of those two campaigns.

[\*The Maneuver Warfare Handbook\*](#) by William Lind is a primer in the tactics of maneuver warfare. Although a controversial figure who never served in the military, Bill Lind captures the basic principles and tactics of maneuver warfare and describes them in a manner that is easily understood and applied by junior leaders. The opening portion of *The Maneuver Warfare Handbook* is a somewhat biased and unsupported critique of AirLand Battle that Lind felt was necessary to make his case for adopting maneuver warfare, but once you get past that his presentation is clear, concise and compelling. As a young cavalry troop commander I found it easy to train my leaders and Troopers in executing the techniques Lind suggests and we had great success in their application.

[\*The Breaking Point\*](#) by USA Colonel Robert Doughty, former head of the Department of History at the United States Military Academy, is a description of maneuver warfare, in the form of Blitzkrieg, in execution in the German operation to invade France at Sedan in 1940. Adeptly describing leaders and units in action at the tactical and operational levels, this book enables military professionals to “see” maneuver warfare in execution and to understand the interplay of combat leadership, training, planning and tactical/technical expertise in creating success in maneuver warfare. As a Battalion Commander my task force spent a year conducting peacekeeping operations in Bosnia and upon our return we needed to refocus on major combat operations. Colonel Doughty led us on a staff ride of the Sedan campaign he describes in *The Breaking Point* and it served to educate young leaders who had never trained in mid-to-high intensity combat operations on the challenges they would face and their role as leaders in overcoming such challenges.

[\*The Heights of Courage\*](#) by Brigadier General Avigdor Kahalani (Israeli Defense Forces) is a description of tactical defensive operations in mounted maneuver warfare on the Golan Heights in the 1973 Arab-Israeli War. Since we can’t guarantee that we will never be surprised nor that we will never be outnumbered; this book describes leadership and

operations when the IDF was both surprised and outnumbered. For junior leaders, particularly those who have not experienced combat, this book will be extremely instructive, taking flat and monotone doctrine and bringing it alive. In 1977, as a brand new platoon leader I had the honor of escorting BG Kahalani for three days when he visited our unit. As one who had at that point never been in combat, it was a tremendously enriching experience and assisted me in developing and conducting training and leader development for my unit.

[On Point](#) by Colonels Greg Fontenot, E.J. Degen and Dave Tohn describes the U.S. Army operations in the invasion of Iraq in 2003. Supported by the interviews and information collected by the OIF Study Group during and immediately after the invasion that initiated Operation Iraqi Freedom, this work describes the planning, preparation, and execution of the air/mechanized maneuver campaign from Kuwait, throughout Iraq to defeat the forces of Saddam Hussein. Only 13 years in the past, the descriptions of tactical and operational-level engagements, battles and operations; the insights from the participants and the implications of the campaign are an invaluable source for leaders and organizations in thinking about and preparing for future maneuver warfare campaigns.

[Colonel \(Ret\) Jim Greer](#) is a graduate of the United States Military Academy who commanded armor and cavalry units at every level through brigade. A veteran of combat operations in Iraq and Afghanistan and peacekeeping operations in Balkans, he served along the Inter-German Border defending NATO during the Cold War. When not in combat units he served primarily in leader development positions, including instructing tactics at West Point and as the Director of the U.S. Army School of Advanced Military Studies. Since retiring he has taught leadership, planning and organizational effectiveness in the private sector.

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