

## **LETTERS**

### **Command and control of air power**

I wish to point out an error in Air Vice-Marshal Gavin Turnbull's otherwise magisterial account of the evolution of command and control of Western air power [*United Service* 68 (3), 9 – 12, September 2017]. He makes two references to Operation Torch, the World War II allied offensive in North Africa, as taking place in: (1) 'February 1943' (p. 9); and (2) '1943' (p. 11). Operation Torch may still have been continuing in 1943, but it commenced on 8 November 1942 just after the El Alamein victory in Egypt. This can be checked up in any history of World War II but, for example, Gerhard L. Weinberg's *A world at arms: a global history of World War II* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge) 1994, p. 431, will establish it.

**John Stephenson**  
Leura, NSW, 23 October 2017

Townsville. The soldiers' brave deeds in the battle were commemorated; those of the seamen who fought the material forward against tough Japanese opposition were not. The wherewithal that allowed the Army to win their victory there – and everywhere else, was delivered thanks to sea power. I think it would be only fair that Military historians at least make mention of that.

**Ian Pfennigwerth**  
Corlette, NSW, 27 October 2017

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### **Military historians ignore the naval contribution**

Our Military history seems to be replete with accounts of 'Corporal Smith' leading his section up Hill 375 under heavy Japanese fire, or charging, bayonet fixed, against German defences at El Alamein, leading readers to believe that it's the whole story. But it isn't. 'Smith' and his mates got to Hill 375 or El Alamein thanks to a lot of hard and dangerous work by various navies.

Similarly, all 'Smith's' logistic support – his uniform, rifle, ammunition, food, transport and its fuel – all got there courtesy of the Navy, as did the barbed wire, equipment and *matériel* for the supporting arms and services. The medical supplies, medical personnel and ambulances, all waiting to take care of 'Smith' if he were hit and survived, reached there escorted by the Navy, and if he recovered he returned home a hero by ship, protected by the Navy.

Getting the 9<sup>th</sup> Australian Division back home in 1943 caused a major diversion of naval assets to the task.

Of course, the senior Army officer getting the glory for loosing 'Smith' against the enemy also owed his success, not just to his generalship, but to the Navy in the same way.

In the Pacific theatre, General MacArthur's policy of leapfrogging enemy strongholds in his relentless advance toward the Philippines left our Army in its wake – mopping up. Some Royal Australian Navy ships remained to help with the task, but our big ships were at the spear point, ready for their role in the invasion of Kyushu when the Japanese surrendered. Sea power ensured that isolated Japanese garrisons were left to starve or die of disease, unable to offer mutual support or even to be withdrawn to join their comrades at the battlefield. No need for 'Smith' or his general in that.

Now, you'd think Military historians would give some prominence to these factors, but I see little evidence of it. The naval support that enabled General X to do this or General Y to achieve that is ignored. In a recent address by a very senior Military historian, troops, equipment, fuel, ammunition and food all 'arrived' at Milne Bay, presumably on skyhooks, or towed behind 'Diggers' swimming from