

## Foreword

Winston Churchill once remarked, “The further backward you look, the further forward you can see.”

When I think about World War II in the Pacific, I think about Pearl Harbor, unrestricted submarine warfare against Japan, the battle of Midway, Guadalcanal, the Solomon Islands campaign, the Marianas Turkey Shoot, Iwo Jima, Okinawa, Hiroshima and Nagasaki. I think about carrier aviation and amphibious warfare coming of age. Until reading this book I never gave much thought to mining and countermine warfare and their contributions to victory in the Pacific campaign.

Once again Commanders David Bruhn and Rob Hoole have done a masterful job giving us a detailed history of Allied mining and mine clearing. Over 40,000 mines were deployed for offensive and defensive purposes by Allied ships, submarines and aircraft during the course of the war in the Pacific. The Japanese reportedly deployed over 51,000 mines.<sup>1</sup> Several dozen converted and purpose-built minesweepers cleared over 12,000 mines. Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) personnel rendered safe hundreds of mines to clear mine fields, and so that some of them could be exploited for intelligence purposes. This certainly was the era of “wooden ships and iron men.”

As a submariner I was trained on the use of modern mine hunting sonar and how to traverse a minefield...not an experience I'd voluntarily undertake with a billion-dollar warship without a lot of soul searching! As the Commander of the U.S. Navy's Mine Warfare Command, I developed a deep respect for the complexity, challenges and dangers of minesweeping. For the men who crewed our World War II minesweepers, it took immense courage to drive through a minefield to locate and sweep enemy mines, much of the time within gunshot range of shore batteries and with the ever-present threat of attack from the air. They had rudimentary sweep gear, coarse sonar, and a vital mission to accomplish, whatever the risks. Twenty-six U.S.

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<sup>1</sup> Arnold Lott, *Most Dangerous Sea* (U.S. Naval Institute, 1959), p. 263.

Navy mine warfare ships were lost due to enemy action during the Pacific campaign, clearly illustrating the hazard of mine sweeping in a combat zone. (Several others were also lost due to typhoons, collisions, foundering and other non-combat causes.)

I commend David and Rob for another volume of outstanding research and historical enlightenment. In the U.S. Navy today, mine warfare doesn't have a dedicated mine warfare flag officer to advocate for and lead the community, and doesn't have a recognized career path for officers or enlisted personnel. The U.S. Navy puts very few resources and very little effort into improving the capability and capacity of our mine force, while potential adversaries have on the order of 400,000 mines. As Santayana is often quoted, "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it."<sup>2</sup> Let's not forget the importance of mine warfare in the high-tech age we live in.

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<sup>2</sup> George Santayana, *The Life of Reason*, the Phases of Human Progress, Vol 1, Reason in Common Sense, 1905-1906.