A Glimpse of the Real World

by Dr. Williamson Murray, Horner Professor of Military Theory, Marine Corps University

Commentary on the two preceding articles, which were written by Capt Daniel A. Brown.

The more things change, the more they stay the same. Not only pundits, but military historians tend to focus on the great overarching issues of the day, whether past or present. But military organizations function in the real world where little things more often than not make major differences. To the astonishment of those who conducted the aerial portion of DESERT STORM, the weather was a dominant factor in the conduct of aerial operations throughout the air campaign. And yet in direct contradiction of the fact that weather shut down crucial air operations on a number of occasions, technocrats make claims that suggest they believe weather simply is no longer a player.

The real world, of course, suggests otherwise as Capt Brown indicates in his first article. His suggestion that the weather function be moved from the intelligence to the operational staff may represent one of those incremental improvements that never get in military histories of campaigns. And yet as the impact of Tropical Cyclone Justin during TANDEM THRUST-97 underlines, weather is always going to be with us, and all the technology in the world is not going to make it go away.

Capt Brown's other shot from the field is equally insightful. Technology is going to be of increasing importance to American forces in the next century. It is a force multiplier. But it is only going to be a force multiplier if we think seriously about how we are going to use it. If we design the technology in the fashion that we have designed much of our intelligence function in peacetime—to support the National Command Authorities and higher level staffs—we are going to be in trouble. And "Back to Basics" suggests that we are already going in the wrong direction. Moreover, it presents a salient warning that if the technology, both in how it displays its information and in what kind of information is being displayed, is not user friendly, we are making a significant contribution to true Clausewitzian friction before the first shot is fired. But Adm William A. Owens and the technocrats who follow his lead are not designing systems to be user friendly to the troglodytes in the field. They are designing systems to keep themselves happy. Look for more trouble in the future; friction ain't going away.

US MC

Training in Aussie Land

by Capt Timothy A. Maxwell

Imagination and common sense are about the only real limits on what you can do in this remarkable training area.

During Exercise TANDEM THRUST-97 in the Shoal Water Bay Training Area (SWBTA), Queensland, Australia, I ran a range control type operation for the live fire, small arms ranges. While fulfilling this billet, I learned a few things that I think might be helpful to units training in Australia in the future.

If we are to maximize the unique training opportunity available to us in Australia, we need to become more familiar with the Aussie way of doing business. Their live fire ranges are unlike anything I have ever seen. First and foremost, they do not train on predesigned ranges and have no regulations for any specific training areas. Nowhere did I find azimuths of fire, left and right lateral limits, safety brief formats, etc. The larger training area was not subdivided into smaller fixed ranges. What they did do was show Gunner Alexander J. Nevgloski from 2d Battalion, 4th Marines (2/4) to a couple of large draws that they frequently use, but they still had no range regulations. We were not restricted to any area; and wherever we decided to go, we were still required to determine the amount of maneuvering we were going to do and then construct the surface danger zone (SDZ) to support that maneuver.

The Aussies rarely shoot the same range twice, and they create a new SDZ every time they train for live fire. They simply assign the us-