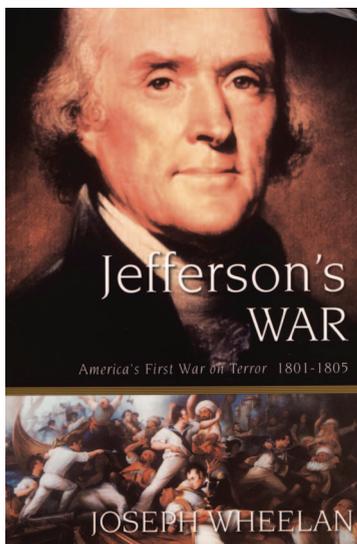


Countering Terror in the 19th Century

reviewed by SSgt Troy J. Cronbaugh

JEFFERSON'S WAR: America's First War on Terror 1801–1805. By Joseph Wheelan. Carroll and Graf, New York, 2003, ISBN 0786712325, 336 pp., \$27.00. (Member \$24.30)



Jefferson's War is a valuable resource to understanding some of the many problems that today's military faces. The book explains in detail the genesis of the political decisions that have shaped our present military. The author portrays many of the current problems that exist in the world today, such as terrorism, prisoners of war, military maneuvers and tactics, and the economic and political pressure of other countries.

The United States has been hit hard recently by targeted acts of violence and terrorism. These events have been thoroughly critiqued and analyzed. Often overlooked, however, is that terrorism has been around since the beginning of recorded history. These calculated acts not only took the United States by surprise but many other nations around the world also. In order to battle this thing called terrorism, specific steps must be taken. The

first step is discussion of past, present, and future events in many different forums such as writing books and articles about historically similar subjects.

Joseph Wheelan accomplished this step in an exceptional way with *Jefferson's War*. Wheelan spent 26 years as an editor and reporter for the Associated Press and the *Casper Star-Tribune* in Wyoming. *Jefferson's War* is a thorough historical account of a 5-year period focusing on North African areas such as Algiers, Tripoli, Egypt, and other countries surrounding the Mediterranean region that were constantly and brutally terrorized by the Barbary pirates.

As with almost any period of time in the history of the world, political and economic uncertainty existed. In 1801 the Barbary pirates were a large uncontrollable entity that wreaked havoc, hate, and discontent on merchant ships and countries surrounding the Mediterranean. The pirates forced nations to take drastic steps in an effort to combat and cease the malicious terrorist operations. Relief existed from the Barbary pirates' rampant and brutal actions only if an initial payment was made to them followed closely by additional annual payments. This bribery activity, that occurred over 200 years ago, mirrors the al-Qaeda terrorist cells that exist today and threaten Saudi Arabia.

Upon assuming the Presidency, Thomas Jefferson, the third President of our Nation, dealt with the Barbary pirates swiftly and decisively. Wheelan explained that after 3 weeks of holding office, and without consulting or notifying Congress, the President sent

the newly established U.S. Navy with a small number of Marines to the Mediterranean to fight the Barbary pirates. Success came rapidly once the United States joined forces with European and North African countries to defeat the enemy.

Wheelan recounts several monumental events that are deeply rooted in today's Marine Corps. He provides background and accounts for such military milestones as the creation of the Continental Marines on 10 November 1775 with a strength, until 1784, of 50 officers and 2,000 enlisted men. The reestablishment of the U.S. Marine Corps on 11 July 1798 is also noted in *Jefferson's War*. Additionally, several historically famous Marines are discussed for their accomplishments. An example is 1stLt Presley O'Bannon, who was presented a scimitar from Hamet (a bashaw of Tripoli) for the first decisive battle against the Barbary pirates. A facsimile of that scimitar is currently the Marine Corps officer's sword that is used for drill and ceremonies. It is called the Mameluke sword.

Jefferson's War is a comprehensive and detailed account of a significant historical period embedded in today's military culture. The book should be read by any member of the military, along with historians and civilians wanting to learn more about how military, political, and economic problems were handled over 200 years ago.



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