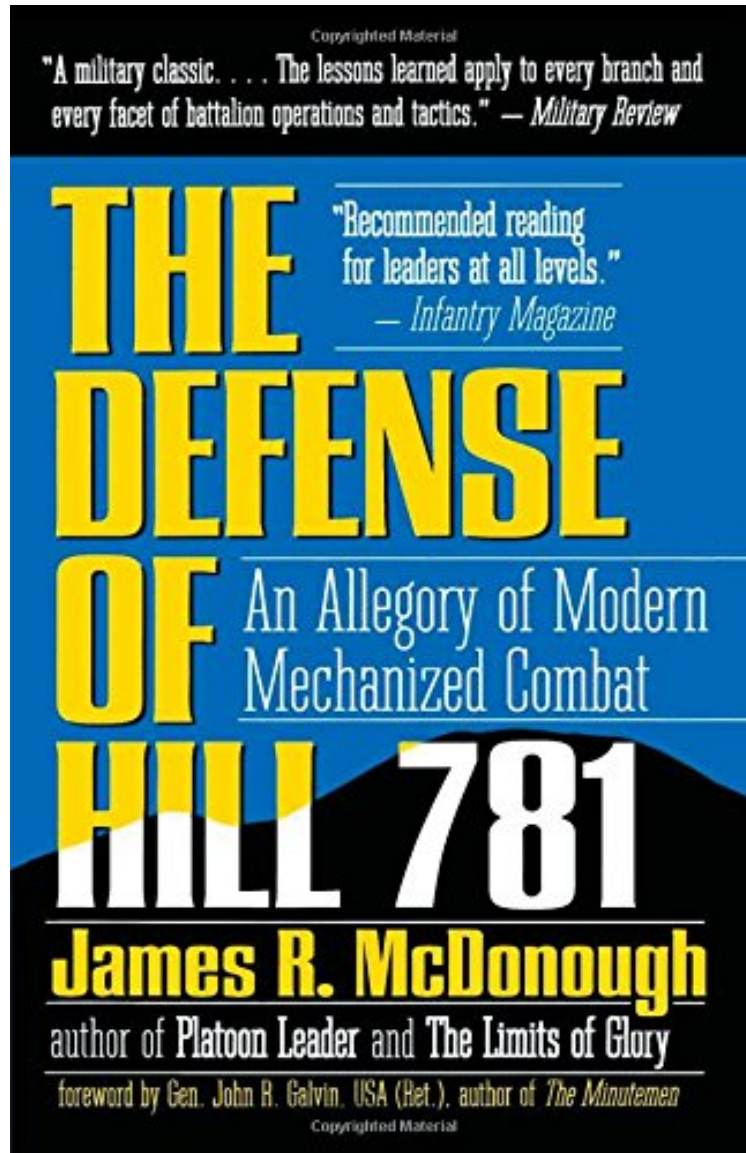


# The Defense of Hill 781: An Allegory of Modern Mechanized Combat

James R. McDonough

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**James R. McDonough : The Defense of Hill 781: An Allegory of Modern Mechanized Combat** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Defense of Hill 781: An Allegory of Modern Mechanized Combat:

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. The realities of modern mechanized combatBy Utah BlaineMaybe

not so timely nearly twenty years of its publication given all that has happened in Iraq and Afghanistan in the war on terror, Col. McDonough's educational monologue about modern mechanized warfare is still an outstanding read for anyone interested about what life would be like in an ACR against an equal and determined opponent. This work is an updated version of the military classic 'The Defense of Duffer's Drift'. Col. A. Tack Always is tasked to lead a mechanized battalion at the US Army's NTC to prove himself worth. Each chapter describes one battle against a roughly equal opponent. The point of this text is largely educational - mistakes are made in the early battles, but each time the Col (and the reader) learn valuable lessons that are put to use in the next battle. Overall this is an outstanding work and I would highly recommend it to anyone interested in the tactics or history of mechanized combat. Most of the other reviews are written by soldiers. I am not and never have been in the military, but have an interest in military affairs. If you want to know what combat in a mechanized battalion would have been like against the Soviets, this is about the best book I've found. Presumably this is a fair characterization of what mechanized combat would have been like in WWII in Europe, and if so it would have been fast-paced and extremely lethal on both sides. Additionally, this is a story foremost about leadership - the skills and character required to lead a mechanized battalion. The amateurs are interested in the tanks and APCs and the tactics. For the professional, it is overcoming the sleep deprivation and the fear to make confident decisions (even when you don't know what the hell you are doing), to learn from one's mistakes, to understand your subordinates (know their strengths and weaknesses), and to get back up after you've been humiliatingly knocked down. This is a no-brainer - if you have even a passing interest in mechanized warfare (either professionally or as an amateur), you aren't going to find a better way to spend \$15. I'm glad to have this on my shelf - highly recommended. 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Must Read for OCTs By Dwmorg Great book and a must read for officers who are Observer Coach Trainers! "How easy it is to sit comfortably removed from the fray and critique the failings of other. How difficult to have the mission yourself. How pompous to spout doctrine knowingly with an attitude that success lies in the knowing, not in the doing. How humbling to discover the excruciating difficulty that lies in the doing!" 3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Loved it so much that I'm ordering 2 copies By GenPatton I read this book years ago when I was a young armor officer. I'm now a field grade but I can't find my old copy so I just ordered two; one for me and another for my daughter's boyfriend who will become an officer soon. As other reviews say, people w/out military experience or knowledge may not appreciate this book a great deal. It does a great job of demonstrating how all the pieces have to work together in order to be successful. I think it's important that in this Counter Insurgency (COIN) era we don't forget about large scale high intensity kinetic ops. It's easier to practice high intensity ops and then learn COIN than the other way around. COIN relies on common sense, small unit leadership and understanding 2nd and 3rd order effects; but high intensity requires lots of technical training. If you are a cadet or young officer read this book every couple of years.

"Brilliant, hardhitting description of modern war on the U.S. Army's premier training ground. A must-read tactical primer for today's warrior."—John C. "Doc" Bahnsen, Brigadier General, USA (Ret.) At the turn of the century a small, humorous book on tactics was published. The Defense of Duffer's Drift quickly became a bestseller and today is still widely read. The Defense of Hill 781 is a modern version of this classic—a tactical primer with ample funpoking, but with serious lessons to be learned. Lt. Col. A. Tack Always Finds himself in the California high desert, alone, disheveled, confused. A guide soon appears to inform him of his situation: He has died and is now in Purgatory (his humility in the Army was somewhat lacking) where he must atone for past sins. Purgatory is, aptly, the U.S. Army's National Training Center (NTC), and Lt. Col. Always may earn his way out by completing a successful mission. Through a series of six missions, the reader plans and fights with Lt. Col. Always, making the split-second decisions that determine victory or defeat, life or death. Through successive difficulties, some important lessons are burned into the commander's brain—lessons about tactics, about people, about what it takes to fight a winning battle. Like Duffer's Drift this book is a valuable resource for all military tacticians. For the armchair general, it is a fascinating look at how the members of a military unit work together in combat.

About the Author Colonel James R. McDonough, USA (Ret.), graduated from West Point and served in Vietnam as an infantry platoon leader in the legendary 173rd Airborne Brigade. A military theorist who has helped shape the post-Cold War army's thinking, he is also the author of The Defense of Hill 781 and The Limits of Glory. Now retired from active duty, McDonough lives with his family in Tallahassee, Florida.