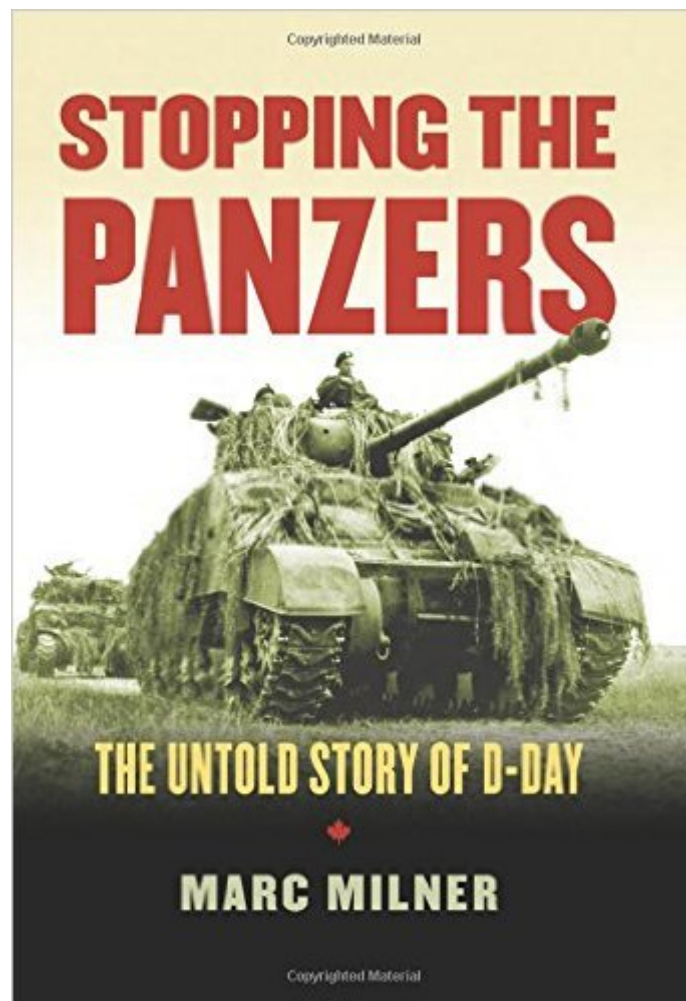


The book was found

Stopping The Panzers: The Untold Story Of D-Day (Modern War Studies (Hardcover))



Synopsis

In the narrative of D-Day the Canadians figure chiefly "if at all" as an ineffective force bungling their part in the early phase of Operation Overlord. The reality is quite another story. As both the Allies and the Germans knew, only Germany's Panzers could crush Overlord in its tracks. The Canadians' job was to stop the Panzers—which, as this book finally makes clear, is precisely what they did. Rescuing from obscurity one of the least understood and most important chapters in the history of D-Day, *Stopping the Panzers* is the first full account of how the Allies planned for and met the Panzer threat to Operation Overlord. As such, this book marks nothing less than a paradigm shift in our understanding of the Normandy campaign. Beginning with the Allied planning for Operation Overlord in 1943, historian Marc Milner tracks changing and expanding assessments of the Panzer threat, and the preparations of the men and units tasked with handling that threat. Featured in this was the 3rd Canadian Division, which, treated so dismissively by history, was actually the most powerful Allied formation to land on D-Day, with a full armored brigade and nearly 300 artillery and antitank guns under command. Milner describes how, over four days of intense and often brutal battle, the Canadians fought to a literal standstill the 1st SS Panzer Corps—which included the Wehrmacht's 21st Panzer Division; its vaunted elite Panzer Lehr Division; and the rabidly zealous 12th SS Hitler Youth Panzer Division, whose murder of 157 Canadian POWs accounted for nearly a quarter of Canadian fatalities during the fighting. *Stopping the Panzers* sets this murderous battle within the wider context of the Overlord assault, offering a perspective that challenges the conventional wisdom about Allied and German combat efficiency, and leads to one of the freshest assessments of the D-Day landings and their pre-attack planning in more than a decade.

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Customer Reviews

I bought this book under the impression that it would offer a detailed reappraisal of the opening tactical level battles between the invading Canadians and 12th SS Panzer Division. I was wrong to believe that, because it offers so much more. Let me say at the onset that this book is immaculately researched and written in extremely accessible prose. That said, it's not about non-stop battle action, so fans of that genre might want to think a bit before purchasing. However, if you are interested in new information about D-Day, and this book abounds with original insights, Milner will appeal to you. The first two chapters provided me with the unexpected surprise referred to above. They are devoted to the politics influencing the Canadian Army's participation in D-Day, who eventually led that formation during the Normandy campaign, the relationship between the Canadian, American, and British roles in the opening stages of the invasion, and how the Allies prepared for the German response to the landings. There are a number of interesting revelations, to include the fact that the Canadian and British armored formations unveiled the Sherman Firefly and M-10 Achilles for the first time during the Normandy campaign. The Anglo-Canadians also employed sabot rounds for their towed anti-tank guns for the first time during the invasion. The Germans, therefore, were faced with a much more potent anti-armor threat than they expected. In turn, SHAEF totally overestimated the number of panzers potentially opposing the landings, which led in part to the decision to assign the Canadians the task to absorb the inevitable counterattack.

I have not yet read the book but I attended a lecture at The Military Museums in Calgary at which the author presented material from this work, and discussed his main thesis, showed maps, and generally discussed his main thrust. I am ordering the book and will change my review if my opinion substantially changes. On the face of it, based on what was presented in the lecture, and the Q&A afterwards, it would appear Dr. Milner has broken some interesting new ground based on a reinterpretation of existing documents. By reexamining the COSSAC planning briefs as well as other information - including German plans (though he admittedly did not travel to Germany to study primary documents) - he has matched up the unique organization of the 3rd Canadian Division to their actual role on D-Day and the early days of the invasion. While historians generally presumed previously that the Canadians were intended to just slash and fight their way inland, Milner has

carefully determined that based on German doctrine and experience, as well as Allied planning documents, the Canadians were actually supposed to do exactly what they did - fight off a German armoured counter-attack. Historians have criticized the Canadians for not advancing further inland, but Milner points out - that was never supposed to be their job. They landed with mobile artillery, and lots of it, to allow them to fight off the tanks they knew were going to come for them. And formations like 12th SS did exactly that - and performed poorly. Historians like Brian Reid have pointed out that if Canadian formations did as poorly as 12th SS in the opening days of the campaign, they would have been ripped apart by historians for their incompetence. Milner has set out to turn the conventional thinking on Canada's role on its ear.

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