

George B. Clark. *The United States Military in Latin America: A History of Interventions through 1934.* Jefferson: McFarland & Company, 2014. 216 pp. \$29.95, paper, ISBN 978-0-7864-9448-4.

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Commissioned by Margaret Sankey (Air University)

George B. Clark's most recent book is a short read with broad ambitions and a number of useful insights. Organized by country, *The United States Military in Latin America* examines a number of armed interventions across a capacious temporal and geographic space. The core of the book is devoted to the occupations of Nicaragua, Haiti, and the Dominican Republic by US Marine Corps forces in the early twentieth century. Paraguay, Peru, and Puerto Rico warrant a scant five pages between them, Brazil none at all. That, in and of itself, is probably a hint about the text's focus, which is not so much on US military interventions generally but rather on the USMC in Latin America before World War II.

The book is at its strongest when analyzing the growth of the USMC as an institution. Indeed, Clark's thesis could well have been that the USMC grew into a meaningful instrument of US policy through its interventions in Latin America. In the late nineteenth century, US imperial ambitions met instability in Latin America, creating demand for seaborne expeditionary forces. The USMC, in turn, was shaped by operational and tactical circumstances once deployed to the region. Readers will learn about how the marines shaped local forces and experimented with new weapons all the while amalgamating into ever-larger units. Also useful are the "the roll of honor" and bio-

graphical appendices. There are some wonderful photos in the book as well, illustrating the quotidian life of occupation.

Among the book's weaknesses is Clark's slant toward the USMC, which is understandable but unfortunate. Throughout, Clark marginalizes the contributions of the US Navy and Army, creating a number of blind spots. Consider his history of US military intervention in Chile. Clark's account begins in 1890, describing the immediate antecedents of the Baltimore Incident (1891). This truncated scope ignores the activities of contracted Civil War veterans in Peru and Chile during the 1860s and the role of the United States in the War of the Pacific (1879-84). Also neglected is the "chase of the *Itata*" (a contributing factor in the Baltimore Crisis) during which the USS *Charleston* pursued a Chilean steamer down the coast of Mexico, exciting comment around the world and "anti-Yankee" sentiment across Chile. Given the book's encyclopedic title, these are considerable omissions.

Additionally, there are also some regrettable turns of phrase in this book. For example, when discussing an engagement on Montagne Noire in Haiti, Clark writes, "It was Black Mountain, all right, and its [sic] was loaded with fighting blacks just waiting to take on the white devils" (p. 68). The articulation between race and violence is a

fertile subject for historians of the US military. It's a shame Clark missed his opportunity to probe that relationship, even as he (apparently uncritically) uses language about race that already sounds very dated.

Finally, Clark's methodological emphasis on US sources and secondary literature excludes the perspectives of Latin Americans. We learn a great deal about how the USMC developed in Latin America but very little about the people and places that were occupied and attacked by the United States.

All that said, the book will be of interest to many. The short chapters on the USMC occupations in Haiti, Nicaragua, and the Dominican Republic are useful histories in and of themselves, which could easily be assigned in a military history course. Clark's analysis of USMC internal correspondence will also be valuable to those who do not have access to the original texts. Students and professional historians searching for case studies that could be further developed will find ample choice here. Casual readers, too, will no doubt enjoy Clark's vivid operational descriptions of the USMC's small wars in Latin America.

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