Commandant’s Professional Reading List

- Why Read *Team of Rivals*? –

“My word is out to these people, and I can’t take it back.”
- Abraham Lincoln

*Team of Rivals* is an intriguing read that, first and foremost, examines the personal traits, principles, and tactics that were paramount to President Lincoln’s success in leading the country through the Civil War. President Lincoln had deep convictions and an uncommon understanding of human nature. He adeptly applied his understanding to relationships with his cabinet, with the Congress and Senate, with his Generals, and, most importantly, with the people.

*Team of Rivals* is important to the intermediate level military reader as a window into the mechanics of the politics of the day and the maneuvers that were necessary to hold the President’s team together through enormous cultural, political and organizational change. The book lays bare the inner workings of the government, key relationships, the stark issues that divided the country, the importance of the “people’s opinion” and the realities of civilian control of the military, all amidst a sea of ulterior egos, interests and agendas. This history provides good context for similar contemporary issues faced by recent Presidents.

As you read, keep in mind President Lincoln’s reliance on the wording and intent of the *Declaration of Independence* and the *Constitution*, his understanding of the value of information based on truth and the reality of perception, the importance of civilian control of the military and his insistence on competent, aggressive generalship within the bounds of military authority. The book is fairly easy to read because it tells a good story complete with heroes and villains that does not get bogged down in the myriad of characters and bureaucratic minutiae. Any military reader will come away with a unique perspective regarding the complexities of leadership within government - in fact, leadership in any organization – and the relationships necessary to build and maintain around affirmative and divisive personalities for a vital mission or cause. And, the reader will enjoy the telling.