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Russell W. Ramsey

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# Review Essays

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## Reading Up On the Drug War

### RUSSELL W. RAMSEY

Readers can profit from a spate of books and articles about the world's struggle against narcotics. This literature can be grouped topically into investigative reporting, ideological cannon shots, and policy critiques. Some of the investigative reporting is so realistic that the reader feels drawn into the nether world of the narcotics culture. Some of the ideologically driven authors disguise their rapier thrusts with footnotes, quotations, and other scholarly apparatus, thereby giving the impression of an objective policy critique. And the more scientifically written policy studies pull the reader into columns of data and pithy little annotations about what CHI2 really means in this case. One needs to be very focused to assess these books, for among them there is fascinating reading on a morbid, gripping, and sadly enduring topic.

Maria Jimena Duzan is a journalist with *El Espectador* (*The Spectator*) of Bogota, a splendid newspaper aligned generally with the Liberal Party. Her *Death Beat*, translated from the Spanish in 1994 by Peter Eisner, is simply the best book of our times on crime reporting. With hair follicles tingling, the reader wonders how an attractive, well-educated woman got close enough to the murderous subjects she investigated--Colombia's infamous cartel lords--with her objectivity and her life intact. In 1989, Guy Gugliotta and Jeff Leon of the *Miami Herald* staff produced the still relevant *Kings of Cocaine: Inside the Medellin Cartel*, focusing upon druglord Carlos Lehder. Again, the odor of exploding dynamite, the grins of the payoff goons, and the screams of the syndicate's torture victims all come alive, with lots of facts that stand up to later discovery. Max Mermelstein was the evil brain behind the Medellin cartel during that era. He spilled his guts about the infamous Ochoa brothers, Juan David and Fabio, to adventure author Robin Moore, who published the tale in 1990 as *The Man Who Made It Snow*. Arturo Carrillo Strong was a narcotics agent in the southwestern United States during the 1970s, when hard drugs of Latin American origin were becoming a plague. His memoir, *Corrido de Cocaina: Inside Stories of Hard Drugs, Big Money, and Short Lives*, appeared in 1990 and gives the reader a chilling longitudinal awareness of the street drug culture in the United States.

The value of reading these accounts lies in comprehending the milieu and the strength of the challenge before plunging into the policy critiques, where the clinical language somehow bypasses the wretched lives that are under discussion. And, let it be said, there are many other bestseller paperback gut spillers by drug culture participants of dubious veracity. The volumes mentioned above are marked by plausibility and good writing.

Jaime Malamud-Goti produced *Smoke and Mirrors: The Paradox of the Drug Wars* in 1992. While the US Drug Enforcement Administration indeed made mistakes during its pioneer Andean operations, both the DEA and the Bolivian armed forces and National Police learned from their mistakes. Malamud-Goti became so emotionally involved in defaming the supply side anti-drug policy of President George Bush that his account is unbalanced. Kevin Jack Riley, a scholar of demonstrated talent, also lost perspective while indicting the Colombian armed forces and police in his 1993 volume called *The Implications of Colombian Drug Industry and Death Squad Political Violence for U.S. Counternarcotics Policy*. He was partially duped by the syndicate propaganda machines: some of his villains are actually heroes of the anti-narcotics war.

Peter Dale Scott and Jonathan Marshall, an English professor and a newspaper staff financial analyst, wrote *Cocaine Politics: Drugs, Armies, and the CIA in Central America* in 1991. Already convinced that the 1980s conflicts in Nicaragua and El Salvador were contrived mercenary struggles initiated by President Ronald Reagan, these two apologists for the Nicaraguan Sandinistas and the El Salvadoran FMLN communist guerrillas indicted the drug war on similar lines. They discovered that there actually were no drug cartels in Latin America, nor even significant drug traffic save that being done by Reagan's "Contra" mercenaries in Nicaragua, General Manuel Noriega's Panamanian Defense Force, and the pro-US armies of Honduras and El Salvador. When this reviewer was a doctoral student in

Latin American history, the University of California Press at Berkeley produced the leading scholarly works in the field. But their editorial decision to float this volume suggests a triumph of crudely ideological spin doctoring. Scott B. MacDonald's 1988 book, *Dancing on a Volcano*, for example, names most hemispheric druglords and is quite critical of US Andean drug policy; but it also shows clearly that Fidel Castro and his Sandinista allies in Nicaragua were selling drugs for cash to support their regimes in the 1980s.

There is plenty of room for scholarly writing that concludes US Andean drug enforcement policy to be a failure. The best short item on this theme is Bruce M. Bagley and Juan G. Tokatlian, "Dope and Dogma: Explaining the Failure of U.S.-Latin American Drug Policies," in Jonathan Hartlyn, Lars Schoultz, and Augusto Varas's 1992 edited volume, *The United States and Latin America in the 1990s: Beyond the Cold War*. The weak spot in Professor Bagley's thesis--that enforcement on the supply side is ineffective--is that no alternative is presented beyond a generic plea for a coordinated approach. Michael Kennedy, Peter Reuter, and Kevin Jack Riley show statistically in their 1994 study, *A Simple Economic Model of Cocaine Production*, that alternative cropping, often recommended as a better choice than crop eradication among traditional Andean cocaine growers, is economically unfeasible. Kevin Jack Riley's 1993 RAND Corporation study, *Snow Job? The Efficiency of Source Country Cocaine Politics*, shows convincingly that in-country interdiction alone cannot win.

Alfred W. McCoy and Alan A. Block draw upon worldwide examples from Asia, the Middle East, Africa, and Latin America in their 1992 volume of essays, *War on Drugs: Studies in the Failure of U.S. Policy*. But they offer no specific alternative, and their definition of failure is not always consistent. In 1993, veteran Pentagon policy analyst Carl H. Builder found in his book *Measuring the Leverage: Assessing Military Contributions to Drug Interdiction* that the problems of precise measurement and assessment were virtually insurmountable. Michael Childress would disagree, for he did a series of RAND Corporation studies which measure the drug trade with apparent precision. His 1994 work, *A System Description of the Cocaine Trade*, plus his 1993 studies with similar titles on heroin and marijuana should be read in conjunction with Builder's analysis. What emerges is the late Professor Hans Zetterbourg's oft-forgotten theory of the mid-range value in the social sciences. Global measurement yields statistical futility, and micro measurement produces precision about nothing that matters, so one picks the theory of the mid-range value. Childress's measurement parameters appear to be a healthy compromise between policy relevance and statistical precision.

Since a number of the studies concentrate heavily on the futility of fighting the drug war militarily in the Andes, through surrogate armies and police, one searches hopefully for some kind of study suggesting that the balanced approach--supply side interdiction at all levels, full court press against demand--may be working. The best exposition for the balanced attack is by Professor William O. Walker III, in a 1989 volume called *Drug Control in the Americas*. The Ohio Wesleyan University historian draws upon his research on little-known drug enforcement programs during the 1930s to make parallels with events in the 1980s. Professor Rensselaer W. Lee III argues in his 1991 book, *The White Labyrinth*, for the long-term, balanced approach. He examines bravely the case for legalization of addictive narcotics, concluding that such a policy would relieve some short-term problems at the expense of creating long-term social disasters.

Raphael F. Perl's 1994 study, *Drugs and Foreign Policy: A Critical Review*, may be the best single volume on how the illegal narcotics trade affects the US role in the world. It is complete, balanced, and much more objective than the earlier policy-bashing books, some of which are reviewed here. C. Peter Rydell and Susan S. Everingham carefully examined both supply side and demand side programs in their 1994 analysis, *Controlling Cocaine: Supply Versus Demand Programs*. A good analysis of US Andean drug strategy appeared in Peter H. Smith's 1992 collection of essays, *Drug Policy in the Americas*. Professor Smith shows clearly the policy conflicts that occur when the United States, a global military power whose own citizens are a major cause of the drug problem, attempts to fight a supply side war through a foreign army and police apparatus. But his essays also show signs of progress, and, more important, ways to form regional anti-narcotics partnerships.

Readers who find the drug policy literature depressing will want to check out the annual *National Drug Control Strategy* of the United States. Public Law 100-690 has required the production of this statement by the Office of National Drug Control Policy annually since 1989. Concise yet comprehensive, this document reduces the labyrinth of statistics, government agencies, legal jurisdictions, human rights in conflict, public health challenges, and the rest of

the drug war maze to understandable detail. Drug strategies involve many issues which people simply do not want to face. Some of these are curtailment of civil liberties, acknowledging drug abuse in one's own family, hiring foreign armies and police to kill their own citizens, charges of moral hypocrisy by hemispheric neighbors, raising taxes to fund an unpopular program in a era of runaway national deficit, and dragging the armed forces into law enforcement just when the *posse comitatus* principle--armies for foreign defense only--is coming into acceptance worldwide.

In 1990, the word "coke" meant white addictive powder to some, and a crispy brown drink in a familiar bottle to others. In 1990, US citizens spent \$1.2 billion for "coke" (cocaine) produced in Colombia; the Coca-Cola Corporation International earned \$1.2 billion worldwide for its soft drink. The Colombian army and National Police have lost more personnel in the drug war since 1983 than the United States has lost in all combat operations since 1973. The challenges to national security in the post-Cold War era are, according to most experts, financial deficit and ethnic war in remote areas. Both of these challenges link strongly to the narcotics plague. Military professionals will find the 22 books, studies, and essays reviewed here of considerable value in understanding the reality that the armed forces are deeply involved in fighting the world's seemingly insatiable habit.

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**The Reviewer:** Russell W. Ramsey is a civilian professor at the US Army School of the Americas. He holds the Ph.D. degree in Latin American history from the University of Florida and has written many articles and books on Latin American military topics.

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## Review Essay

### Special Operations Forces and Small Wars

**RYAN J. McCOMBIE**

The first priority of the US military is to preserve the American way of life. A corollary interest is to preserve our interests throughout the world. In small, brushfire, inter- and intra-regional wars, the forces correctly called upon to maintain our interests are often our Special Operations Forces. Many books have been written about these forces since Goldwater-Nichols brought them into the national limelight. Four recent ones address a range of topics: the role of Special Forces in American history, their training and employment, a case study of SOF operations, and a first-person account of SF operations from the earliest days of Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos through the beginnings of high-altitude, low-opening (HALO) parachuting and Special Atomic Demolition Munition (SADM) delivery training and operations.

In *The Commandos: The Inside Story of America's Secret Soldiers*, Douglas C. Waller has written a creditable and timely account of the training and employment of the nation's Special Operations Forces. With a few exceptions, he describes their training and employment accurately without resorting to sensationalism or anecdotes. The book reveals the professionalism and national pride of the men and women in the SOF units.

After describing the 5th Special Forces Group's strategic reconnaissance during Desert Storm, Waller recounts the initial training of each service's Special Operations Forces. He devotes individual chapters to the Army Special Forces, Navy SEALs, 20th Special Operations Squadron, and the Delta Force.

The chapter on the Army Special Forces' basic training describes the culmination exercise for the Special Forces Qualification Course, "Robin Sage." Having accompanied the trainees throughout the exercise, carrying his own rucksack, Waller succeeds in understanding and portraying the stamina required in any Special Forces operation and, more important, the character of the Special Forces soldier. In an age of TQM, he characterizes all the soldiers as intelligent and flexible, with mature judgment and a willingness to learn from their mistakes.

Waller does an excellent job of relating the training to the men and their future missions. He may leave the reader with a few minor false impressions, however. The Army Special Forces, much like the Navy SEALs, recruit from the entire service force, not only from Rangers and infantry. This recruiting is required to meet the varying skill requirements of

Special Forces, as well as the need to infuse new perspectives and flexibility into the force. In addition, the opportunity to withdraw voluntarily, without recrimination, allows any candidate, whether commissioned officer or not, to retain the respect due a soldier who was willing to try with no assurance of success. Overall, Hooah!

After the spate of recent books and films about Navy SEALs, the author's treatment of these forces is refreshing and factual. He followed a SEAL boat crew through Hell Week, the rite of passage, describing their trials and discomforts well enough to give someone who has endured it a sense of déjà vu. To his credit, Waller slept only a few more hours than the men enduring this grueling week. His matter-of-fact account of the training gives the reader a view of the SEALs' character and bond of loyalty to one another.

While this chapter is the most accurate, evenhanded account I have read on SEAL training, it is incomplete in that it describes only Hell Week. Readers may be left wondering how the SEALs learn to dive, free-fall, navigate, pilot high-speed boats, employ demolitions, and do all those other things SEALs do. The material does give the reader a unique and accurate insight into the development of the character of Navy SEALs. Overall, Bravo Zulu!

Waller's treatment of the 20th Special Operations Squadron is also accurate, as he captures the character of the men by observing the training of the pilots and crews at Kirtland Air Force Base. He also describes the electronics systems of the machines surprisingly well. He recognizes the shortfalls of the CH 53s, such as being underpowered for dropping into tight landing zones and having a restricted view of the ground from the cockpit. Overall, Sierra Hotel!

Similarly, his analysis of psychological operations (PSYOPS) gives a candid view of the government's reticence to use this powerful capability. The 4th Psychological Operations Group, which has made enormous strides in recent years, is capable of having much greater effects on its targets than the uninitiated might realize. Its area experts and PhDs design sophisticated campaigns to apply our mastery of the information age and state-of-the-art communications to defeat an adversary. The 4th POG has matured and evolved into a proven combat unit.

Waller admirably points out the bureaucratic entanglements and disregard for this form of warfare throughout the government. It is time for psyops to be integrated into a streamlined, interagency decisionmaking body that allows psyops themes and campaigns to be used well before the introduction of force. Waller does a service to decisionmakers by reporting the psyops successes of Desert Storm. Psyops is an effective, cost-efficient capability that is well worth our attention. Overall, well done!

The author looks at SOF's operational record in several ways, discussing the resistance movement inside Iraq and Kuwait as well as the issues related to SOF organizations that carried out the operations. It is useful to note that Special Operations Command Central (SOCCENT), rather than the Joint Special Operations Command, was the key element in planning and executing SOF activities.

The future of SOF is covered from the perspective of the likely challenges and the people and equipment that will be needed to meet them. Much of the work being done by the Concepts and Studies Division of the Army's Special Warfare Center at Fort Bragg is, at a minimum, worth consideration. Waller notes that some of the new equipment will significantly enhance operations while cautioning against the tendency to rely too much on technology. His premise is that Desert Storm was the last great war. He describes future SOF engagements as revolving around peacetime operations, including counterterrorism, counterdrugs, nation-building, and other regional threats. He subscribes to Bill Lind's theory of a fourth-generation, nonlinear battlefield where warfare has evolved to the point that "the battlefield will include the whole of the enemy's society." Collapsing an enemy's social structure internally will be the goal, rather than just destroying him physically.

Waller has given us a credible book about the nation's Special Operations Forces. He has a solid grip on their training, character, mentality, and capabilities. His book depicts Special Operations Forces as mature, trained, and dedicated forces that can be relied upon to do the nation's bidding and contribute to success in peace or conflict. It is, overall, the best of the works under consideration here.

Sam C. Sarkesian's *Unconventional Conflicts in a New Security Era, Lessons from Malaya and Vietnam* is a scholarly, well-researched work. Sarkesian offers an excellent analysis of the topic to readers who have some background in Vietnam studies or unconventional warfare. For both Malaya and Vietnam, Sarkesian provides a historical framework

of both the protagonist and the country at war. He then walks the reader through the two conflicts in a logical, understandable sequence, making an excellent case for his conclusions without forcing them on the reader.

The account of British operations in Malaya is well researched, though some might suggest that his reliance on source documents originating in the British government results in a narrow view of the status of the country. While some might quibble about exact dates and interpretations of isolated events, Sarkesian's conclusions are supported by modern events in Malaysia.

The analysis of Vietnam is skeletal but outlines the war quite clearly. He assesses accurately the role of special operations and the shortcomings suffered as a result of unenlightened leadership misutilizing assets which had the best potential for success. He describes the US effort in South Vietnam as "divided responsibility, decentralization of command, diffused efforts, and differing strategies." Our failings in Vietnam also included a lack of attention in integrating nonmilitary efforts, and coordination problems with the South Vietnamese military. Despite its brevity, this section of Sarkesian's book allows the reader to see easily the contrasting styles, successes, and failures of the two wars.

The most valuable part of Sarkesian's book is assuredly the last chapter, titled "The United States and the Emerging Security Agenda," in which the author provides a scholarly analysis of the nature of future wars and the ability of US forces to conduct them efficiently. He recognizes the interdependence of the world's nations and the inability of the United States to go it alone in all conflicts. He acknowledges the requirement for our strategy to support indigenous systems, with all that suggests regarding civilian administration, police, political, and socioeconomic issues. "Strategies must be implemented so as to avoid damage to the innate character of the indigenous government," he says. "The notions of selective engagement, honest broker, and soft power are just as appropriate strategies in dealing with states' internal conflicts as they are at the international policy level. The American mindset and way of war must include serious consideration of different cultures."

The author looks carefully at strategy, doctrine, and required force structure, exhorting the government to "integrate the civilian and military components into a truly effective sixth service; to allow primacy for unconventional conflicts to rest with the Special Operations Forces, combined with traditional aid and assistance; and [to] establish a clear distinction in the US special operations command between the two major components of unconventional conflict, special operations and special forces."

Sarkesian's final chapter touches on an increasingly troubling aspect of SOF. Whereas unconventional operations are historically seen as low-visibility economy of force and resource operations, normally using indigenous counterparts, more and more emphasis in recent years has been placed on strike operations. Direct action, counterterrorism, and special reconnaissance operations have an important role, but they should not be the focus of all SOF training and planning. As Sarkesian states, "Care must be taken not to refashion the Special Forces into a Spetsnaz-type organization aimed primarily at direct support of theater tactical operations." He observes that in times of relative peace, unconventional operations consisting of foreign internal defense, humanitarian assistance, nation-building, counterdrug assistance, and security assistance programs can achieve our political objectives at low risk with high potential for success. In time of conflict, unconventional operations are primarily warfare operations--forming, training, and equipping indigenous forces; evasion and escape; subversion and sabotage; and other operations of low visibility, covert, or clandestine nature.

The direct action missions of counterterrorism and personnel recovery are, as far as possible, best executed by forces specifically designed, equipped, and trained to execute them. These units train to perform their missions in an efficient manner through stealth, speed, and violence. The missions require an inordinate amount of emphasis for the units training to do them. The result is that the units designed to perform these missions are much better trained, organized, and resourced to execute them than are other special forces. Emphasizing these missions throughout the SOF would result in a duplication of effort and would sacrifice competence in other important operations.

In a view from ground level, Sergeant Major Joe R. Garner's *Copperhead* describes the early days of the modern Special Forces soldier. This book has the ring of truth throughout; revered special operations soldiers like retired Colonel Stanley Olchovik and retired Major Dick Meadows would not have endorsed the book were it not accurate.

The author chronicles the background and exploits of a Special Forces soldier during a time when the Special Forces were doing unconventional warfare and unconventional operations, when more was not better, and when a soldier in faraway, foreign places depended on his training and his wits to conduct difficult missions in the national interest. He depicts well the individualism of the early Special Forces era and the willingness of SF soldiers to attempt and usually accomplish arduous, sometimes near-impossible missions. This work is written from the viewpoint of the soldier in the field. Consequently it sometimes suffers from the author's inability to distance himself from details; the book does, however, provide clearly the perspective of those executing the missions. This view often is quite different from that of the politicians and pundits who ultimately control and profit from mission success.

The author examines "White Star" in Laos; the Bay of Pigs in Cuba; early high-altitude, low-opening parachute jumping; training; and near-operations in Panama. He complains about the use of Special Forces in direct action missions in Vietnam, asserting that these missions were "costing us a lot of SF who had spent many years in guerrilla warfare." He opens a small window into the operations of MACVSOG, a covert, clandestine organization initially run by the Central Intelligence Agency that conducted operations considered "officially disavowable."

This book of personal high adventure rings true. It is a fun read, especially for someone who participated even on the periphery of the operations. The value of the book is that it documents (albeit without substantiation) the success of small bands of audacious men accomplishing the nigh-impossible. The British special forces motto "Not through strength but through guile" provides an appropriate description of this era of Special Operations.

Unfortunately, not all recent books on SOF offer similar rewards. In *Low-Intensity Conflict in American History*, Claude C. Sturgill attempts to integrate wide-ranging conflicts under the name of low-intensity conflict. He quotes various authors on lesser-known early conflicts such as "Bleeding Kansas" and John J. Pershing's expedition into Mexico. His technique is to ask questions at the end of each passage, offering amateurish, superficial analysis of what others have written.

Sturgill confuses insurgency with counterinsurgency, kidnapping with terrorism, and the statutory roles of counterterrorism forces with those of the FBI and other law enforcement agencies. He doesn't understand the legalities in psychological operations or the difference between "black" and "white" psychological operations. He makes unsubstantiated, unsupportable statements such as this:

As late as the early part of 1970, psychological operations by the US Army were still at or close to the clean and white level. The black and dirty level operations were still performed by other units, usually sponsored by the CIA. It is questionable whether the US forces are any more astute at the more glamorous and bloody psychological warfare operations even now in 1993. This will bear watching by all of us.

Nor does Sturgill hesitate to give ill-conceived advice to the operators. For example, while writing about the bombing of the Marine barracks in Beirut, he writes, "They should have closed the road around the Marine barracks and mined it. Those Marines should have been patrolling with full loaded weapons, and the safety switches should have been in the 'on' position; instead, the reverse was true." Sturgill mixes psychological operations, sabotage, unconventional warfare, and even direct action missions into one large cauldron and calls them all psychological operations, demonstrating how little he understands about any of them.

The book displays a general lack of a basic understanding of Special Operations Forces and their operations; its style and sensationalism make it of little value to either professionals or casual observers of special operations. Sturgill is so far off base it is hard to know where to stop criticizing his work.

Our SOF forces today are as good and in many ways better than any we have ever had. They deserve the best equipment the country has to offer. An attitude of equipment dependency, however, is frightening. Some SOF missions do require highly sophisticated equipment, but all SOF missions require the unique, finely honed skills of the individual operator. An attitude of "Who has the most toys wins" can be expensive, may require extra and often excessive training, and can engender an attitude of dependency on technology as opposed to self-reliance. We must know the difference between taking care of the SOF operator and overindulging him.

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**The Reviewer:** Captain Ryan J. McCombie, USN, formerly the senior Navy representative at the US Army War College, is a graduate of Penn State University and the National War College. Captain McCombie has an extensive background in command, operations, and training of SEAL units and service with the Defense Intelligence Agency. His overseas assignments have included serving as US Military Attaché in Brazzaville, Congo, and tours in Vietnam and France.

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## Review Essay

### **Did Nazis Fight Better Than Democrats? Historical Writing on the Combat Performance of the Allied Soldier in Normandy**

**COLIN F. BAXTER**

It is appropriate, in the afterglow of the 50th anniversary of the Normandy invasion, to examine the historical literature relating to the combat performance of the Allied soldiers who fought in what historian Stephen Ambrose has called "the climactic battle of World War II." After D-Day, great battles were still to come, and six weeks after the invasion, Allied soldiers had taken only as much ground as the Overlord planners had expected to occupy in the first five days. There was no immediate breakout from the beachhead and no quick advance toward Paris and the German frontier. The resulting stalemate in Normandy has produced many disputes, not least of which has been the controversy surrounding the combat performance of Allied soldiers in Normandy, which has come under heavy fire from a variety of sources.

In his popular 40th-anniversary account, *Overlord: D-Day and the Battle of Normandy* (1984), Max Hastings asked, "How was it possible that German troops facing overwhelming firepower and air power, often outnumbered . . . could mount such a formidable resistance against the flower of the British and American armies?" For examples of endurance and sacrifice, Hastings claimed that it was necessary to look to the example of the German army, and to "the extraordinary defence" that German soldiers conducted in Normandy when, he writes, "all the odds were against them." In a *Washington Post* article headlined, "Their Wehrmacht Was Better Than Our Army," published in 1985, Hastings underscored his conclusion that Allied soldiers had shown "too little initiative," "too little determination," and "stopped after trifling casualties" in the Battle of Normandy. Hastings' judgment that in the hour of crisis the democratic soldiers of the West were found wanting has become almost commonplace.

Hastings' poor opinion of the Allied soldiers' performance in Normandy echoed and repeated to a new generation and wider audience the criticisms made by earlier scholars such as S. L. A. Marshall (*Men Against Fire*, 1947), Trevor N. Dupuy, (*A Genius for War*, 1977), and Martin van Creveld (*Fighting Power: German and U.S. Army Performance, 1939-45*, 1982). Despite important replies to these critics by John Sloan Brown ("Colonel Trevor N. Dupuy and the mythos of Wehrmacht superiority: A Reconsideration," *Military Affairs*, 1986), and Fredric Smoler ("The Secret of the Soldiers Who Didn't Shoot," *American Heritage*, 1989), the allegedly poor fighting ability of the Allied soldier

assumed the status of dogma through repetition, while the German soldier became almost mythical as the best fighting man in World War II.

Taking up where the earlier critics of Allied combat effectiveness left off, many recent scholars have emphasized morale and find it lacking among the ordinary American, British, or Canadian soldier, while the German soldier was allegedly well motivated. In their study, *The Battle of Normandy: The Falaise Gap* (1978), military historians James Lucas and James Barker present a widely held view of an outgunned and outnumbered German army in Normandy, a virtual Biblical David, heroically resisting the Allied Goliath. "There stands illuminated [in the Battle of Normandy]," write Lucas and Barker, "the ordinary German soldier." In his book *Brute Force: Allied Strategy and Tactics in the Second World War* (1990), a "radical reappraisal" of World War II, John Ellis repeats the view of Field Marshal Rommel that Allied materiel superiority was responsible for his defeat. Pontificating on the incompetence of Allied commanders and their troops, Ellis asserts that any comparison between the Allied armies and the German army can be only "invidious." In *The Lonely Leader: Monty 1944-1945* (1994), Alistair Horne repeats the criticisms of the Allied soldiers' combat ability while extolling the fighting ability of "Rommel's `Trojans'" in Normandy, a battle which, Horne declares, "remains one of the miracles of military history."

The oft-repeated assertion concerning Allied combat inferiority is also echoed by Allan R. Millett in his essay "The United States Armed Forces in the Second World War," which appeared in volume three of *Military Effectiveness* (1988). The author concluded that with few notable exceptions the fighting quality of American troops "did not match the Germans." Focusing on the British army, Carlo D'Este's *Decision in Normandy* (1983) blamed war-weariness in the veteran Desert War divisions for some of the difficulty experienced by the British in Normandy. With far less selectivity, Stephen Badsey echoes the charge in his essay for *The D-Day Encyclopedia* (1994).

The revisionist interpretation owes perhaps its largest debt to, and has drunk most deeply from, the B. H. Liddell Hart well of Wehrmacht adulation. Virtually every critic of the Allied soldier's fighting performance in Normandy has quoted approvingly from Liddell Hart's postwar essay "Lessons of Normandy." In a famous sentence, Liddell Hart wrote, "There has been too much glorification of the campaign and too little objective investigation." Unfortunately, however, Liddell Hart had already concluded that the Allied performance in Normandy was "disturbing and depressing." He claimed that despite having odds of ten to one and more in their favor, the Allies had failed repeatedly to defeat the Germans. In reality, the American, British, and Canadian advantage in infantry was much less than that claimed by Liddell Hart and other critics: the British Second Army in Normandy had a superiority of about two-to-one in infantry, a number not sufficient for rapid offensive success on a narrow front with little room for maneuver.

After World War II, the memoirs of German generals contributed to the illusion of Normandy as a David versus Goliath contest, with the Wehrmacht in the role of David. In *The Rommel Papers* (1953) edited by Liddell Hart, the former Desert Fox constantly emphasized Allied numerical superiority to explain his defeat in Normandy. The same picture of an unfair contest between an exhausted German army facing an Allied juggernaut is found in the memoir of Hans Speidel, *Invasion 1944: Rommel and the Normandy Campaign* (1950).

German generals were not alone in contributing to the myth that Allied soldiers fought poorly in Normandy. Both at the time and in his postwar memoir *With Prejudice* (1966), Air Marshal Arthur Tedder criticized what he considered to be the poor fighting ability and lack of aggressiveness among ground troops. Tedder's view reflected a not uncommon attitude among air commanders, particularly the "bomber barons," that direct support of the ground forces would only demoralize and undermine the infantry's fighting spirit, not to mention divert the air forces from their strategic bombing mission. American air commander Carl "Tooey" Spaatz wrote in his Normandy journal that the Allies had been stopped by what he called "fourteen half-baked German divisions." The extreme pro-air anti-army position is repeated by John Terraine in his book, *A Time for Courage* (1985). For Terraine, the main feature of the Normandy battle was "the magnificent courage, determination and skill of the German Army."

Criticism of the Allied soldier, however has not been unanimous. In his balanced study, *Normandy Bridgehead* (1970), Hubert Essame, who served as a British brigade commander in Normandy, wrote that many of the critics of the Allied soldier knew "as little of the facts of life at the sharp end of the battle as most university professors know of life on the factory floor." The suggestion made by Tedder and some other air commanders that the Army was demoralized was rejected by Essame, who called the accusation "as offensive as it was untrue." According to Essame, Allied soldiers

knew that they were fighting to rid the world of the moral disease of Nazism.

Peter Duignan and L. H. Gann in *The Rebirth of the West* (1993) are highly critical of what they term "a spate of revisionist works that find fault with both the British and American soldier." The authors contend that democratic society produced superior morale. Even in the worst of times, argue Duignan and Gann, the democratic soldiers of the Western Allies never imagined ultimate defeat, and if they lacked enthusiasm, they possessed a much more valuable quality, an unshakable steadiness. H. P. Willmott, in *The Great Crusade* (1990), also takes issue with those historians whom he considers are "obsessed with the pernicious myth of German military excellence, of which the defense of Normandy is held to be an example." In Willmott's view, the Allied performance in Normandy compares very favorably with the German campaign of 1940. An important corrective to the revisionist interpretation of the supposedly poor fighting quality of the Allied soldier remains Martin Blumenson's *Breakout and Pursuit* (1961), a volume in the classic US Army "Green Book" series. Blumenson noted that the Allies fought in almost impassable terrain, ideal for defensive warfare. Unlike Blumenson, Albert Seaton in his study *The Fall of Fortress Europe, 1943-1945* (1981) makes the astonishing statement that the terrain in Normandy was not particularly favorable for defense and did not provide the German troops much cover from Allied air attack. Seaton's Normandy terrain is not Blumenson's. The latter described thick hedgerows, abundant vegetation, and ubiquitous trees providing effective camouflage and obstructing Allied observation from both ground and air. Blumenson further observed that the Germans were concerned by the decline in aggressiveness among their troops. The increasing reluctance of panzer divisions to make a wholehearted attack seemed particularly serious.

From the beginning, the Allies were constantly on the attack, while the enemy was fighting on the defensive behind well-prepared positions. Canadian soldier-historian John English, in his study, *The Canadian Army in the Normandy Campaign* (1991), observes that German troops were well dug-in and camouflaged, with good fields of fire. Noting that all the Canadian divisions were new to battle and had to learn their business as they fought, English observes that gaining battlefield experience while on the attack is much harder than learning on the defensive.

A divisional history that provides a useful comparison between American and German infantry is Joseph Balkoski's book *Beyond the Beachhead: The 29th Infantry in Normandy* (1989). According to Balkoski, although the 29th Infantry Division outnumbered the enemy on its front, the odds were by no means overwhelming in favor of the 29th. Balkoski argues that American infantrymen were simply not given enough firepower. Each American rifle company had only two machine guns compared to the 15 machine guns in a German infantry company. Just as troublesome as German machine guns and anti-tank weapons were their mortars, *nebelwerfers*, and tanks: Panthers and Tigers were qualitatively superior to Shermans and Cromwells.

In the best study of the American Army in World War II, *Eisenhower's Lieutenants: The Campaigns of France and Germany, 1944-1945* (1981) by Russell Weigley, the author appraised the American performance in Normandy most candidly, as in this example:

Major Hansen, speaking for Bradley's headquarters, said, "Hedgerow fighting has been far more difficult than we anticipated." It was too bad that these revelations had to wait upon experience. Tactics and weapons for coping with the Bocage were only now being improvised; hammering them out by trial and error in combat cost time and lives.

Although the Americans faced fewer panzers than did the British and Canadians on the eastern flank, writes Weigley, they confronted "the best defensive country in France, the hedgerows. No forebears of the First Army fighting Indians in the North American forest has ever grappled in a country so conducive to ambush." After D-Day, an American division in Europe could expect about 85 percent casualties among its riflemen for every six weeks of combat. In an article that appeared in *The Journal of Military History* (October 1993), Weigley argued that the American Army was "a decidedly small army for a superpower," and barely adequate for its campaign in Europe. And if some enemy units in Normandy were padded out with old men, boys, and conscripted non-Germans who surrendered in droves, there were also crack German units led by men who had fought on virtually every battlefield from Alamein to Moscow.

In *Six Armies in Normandy*, published at the time of the 40th anniversary of D-Day, John Keegan described the Normandy battle as "the greatest military disaster Hitler had yet suffered in the field." Normandy cost the German

army half a million casualties, which was almost twice as many men as they had lost at Stalingrad. While critics of the Allied soldier have pointed to the spectacular gains made by the Russians in their 1944 summer offensive, Keegan notes that 140 Soviet divisions attacked 28 divisions along a 350-mile front, whereas in Normandy the Allies committed only 34 divisions in all. In Normandy, one million men were engaged in a battlefield of less than 100 miles. The German front that the Allied soldiers had to break through in Normandy was tremendously strong and relatively short. For American soldiers, the casualties experienced in Normandy were comparable to Civil War battles, while British losses sometimes equalled or exceeded those of World War I. Allied soldiers would have wholeheartedly agreed with Rommel's description of Normandy as "one terrible blood-letting."

Distance from an event often produces more evenhanded analyses than those written soon after the action. But not always, and in the case of too many revisionist accounts of the fighting in Normandy, an accurate and true perception of what happened has been lost. Fortunately, the antidote to revisionist extremism is scholarship. If the time has come to revise the revisionist interpretation of the Allied soldier in Normandy, Stephen E. Ambrose does just that in his counter-revisionist 50th anniversary account, *D-Day June 6, 1944: The Climactic Battle of World War II* (1994). Ambrose calls his book, which is based on 1400 oral histories of men who were there, "a love song to democracy." As for the widely accepted perception that the German soldier was far superior to the democratic soldier, Ambrose proclaims unequivocally, "The judgment is wrong."

Many contributions remain to be made to the literature on the Normandy battle, yet it would seem that against an opponent motivated by Nazi ideology and nationalism, ordinary Allied soldiers did much better than critics and theorists give them credit for.

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- The Reviewer:** Dr. Colin F. Baxter is a professor of history at East Tennessee State University. He is a graduate of East Tennessee State and holds M.A. and Ph.D. degrees from the University of Georgia. He is coeditor of *The American Military Tradition from Colonial Times to the Present* (Scholarly Resources Press, 1993) and *The Normandy Campaign, 1944: A Selected Bibliography* (Greenwood Press, 1992).
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## Review Essay

### Air War in Europe: Airpower on Display

WAYNE A. SILKETT

One of the most critical features of World War II aviation, for the participating generation as well as subsequent ones, has been cognitive dissonance--stubbornly clinging to a version of reality seriously at odds with the facts. Thus, the true picture of strategic airpower in World War II has been long in developing.

During World War II, allied leaders confused the results of strategic bombing with its actual effectiveness, especially against Germany. After flying tens of thousands of bombing missions, dropping hundreds of thousands of tons of bombs, and enduring ferocious battles with fighters and flak, participants in the air war hardly longed to have their efforts diminished.

As a result, destruction caused by strategic bombing was considered substantial even if German war production, up until May 1944, was at most slowed down, if hampered at all. One must not forget that while 85 percent of the allied bombs dropped on Germany were let loose after 1 June 1944, more than a third (44,000) of all German aircraft produced during the war were produced in 1944, and more were built during the second six months than the first.

Yet after the war no airpower advocate wanted to accept a reduced role for airpower in the future. Small wonder, then, that official postwar studies such as the Strategic Bombing Survey were ignored. When Allied accounts of losses and successes were compared with German records, especially claims by bomber crews of enemy fighters damaged and destroyed, the claims were sometimes off by many thousand percent. Such disparities also were often ignored. In many circles, the shaky strategic conclusions of the aviators prevail today.

True strategic bombing--strategic nuclear bombing--has so far had limited application, while the effectiveness of conventional strategic bombing has dogged the staunchest airpower champions. Supporters usually have been outnumbered by opponents--normally ground power advocates--who dismiss the effectiveness of conventional strategic bombing as overstated at best and a waste of assets at worst.

Bombing can help, but by itself it has yet to win a war. In the wake of the Gulf War, the debate continues.

Tactical airpower, however, is another matter, even when masquerading as strategic airpower. And strategic or tactical, airpower had its first real test during World War II.

Although few readers will need all of them, the books in the assortment considered here offer something for everyone: airplanes, technology, strategy, people, and valor. While each book in this group deals directly or indirectly with a formidable Luftwaffe, no modern judgment can surpass that of the American airman quoted by Martin Caidin a generation ago, describing German fighter pilots flying through their own flak to get at Allied bombers: "You've got to hand it to Jerry--he's a beautiful flyer and boy, has he got guts." At least in some way, each of the books in this group shows why that wasn't enough for Germany and almost wasn't enough for the Allies.

Joachim Dressel and Manfred Griehl's *Bombers of the Luftwaffe* is a collection of largely excellent photographs less than excellently reproduced. Many of its subjects are the venerable, splendid, highly versatile German World War II standards, the Dornier 17, Heinkel 111, and Junkers 88, although these aircraft and their variants hardly dominate the pages. Curiously, the most readily identifiable German bomber of the war, the Junkers 87 Stuka dive bomber, is omitted.

Much of this book deals with the extensive German research and development effort, which produced design after design but never managed to mesh potential with production. Of particular interest are German efforts in jet aircraft, notably the Arado 234 and the Messerschmitt 262, both designs considerably ahead of comparable American and British jet endeavors.

Although much purely technical data is available in the text, *Bombers of the Luftwaffe* lacks the standard arraying of this information in a single location for each aircraft, thus making comparisons between aircraft difficult.

Earlier long-range German aviation advances had been copied but not surpassed--the Gotha bomber and bomb-carrying dirigibles in World War I and the eight-engine Dornier seaplane between the wars. However, except for notable World War II experiments such as the four-engine Heinkel 274, six-engine Junkers 390, and modified series

production reconnaissance/transport aircraft such as the four-engine Focke-Wulf 200, German attempts at serious long-range bomber production seldom got out of the wind tunnel. *Bombers of the Luftwaffe* hints at this, while *The Luftwaffe War Diaries* and *Clash of Wings* deal with it at much greater length.

Cajus Bekker's reprinted 1964 *The Luftwaffe War Diaries* (English translation in 1968) remains a landmark work. The first comprehensive treatment of the Luftwaffe from the German perspective, it contributed nothing particularly new (its 19 exceptional appendices have probably been quoted more frequently than the text), although it did confirm much that the Allies had already concluded. Part of that confirmation deals with the critical interwar German decision to abandon truly strategic aviation goals--huge fleets of long-range bombers--in favor of more tactical considerations, exacerbated once war began by increasing resource and production demands which put Germany decisively behind industrial giants such as Britain and especially the United States.

Tactical airpower enthusiasts will appreciate *The Luftwaffe War Diaries* for its portrayal of a splendid tactical air force. And if the greatest applications of Luftwaffe air-ground cooperation occurred on the Eastern Front, they nevertheless demonstrate the kinds of results this type of airpower can achieve. As Walter Boyne points out in *Clash of Wings*, the Luftwaffe's greatest air-ground legacy was in forcing a Soviet response in kind. Soviet awareness of the criticality of tactical airpower, of course, continued long after the war.

Bekker and Boyne both highlight the fact that World War II opened with a precise German Stuka attack against Polish detonator wires leading to the approaches to the Dirschau bridges spanning the Vistula. This remarkable success has been seldom if ever repeated, but the feat became part of the myth of Blitzkrieg in general and the hope of tactical airpower in particular.

Boyne, a retired Air Force colonel, former director of the Smithsonian's National Air and Space Museum, and prolific aviation author, has provided in one volume a splendid, highly readable overview of the leaders, aircraft, technology, tactics, and strategy of aviation in World War II. A huge topic to be sure, it is nonetheless spectacularly handled.

Frequently dealing with exquisite detail, *Clash of Wings* never loses sight of the developing, often groping, often unrealized role of airpower in a global land and sea war of unsurpassed dimensions. Only the United States, Britain, and the Soviet Union truly realized, early enough to do anything about it, the huge scale of effort necessary to wield airpower strategically. By the time Germany and Japan reached similar conclusions, it was simply too late.

The Germans during World War I had envisioned the possibilities of large-scale strategic airpower while the British clung to more tactical doctrines. During the interwar period these considerations--and planning and industrial preparation--were reversed. Wishful "no more war" thinking aside, the interwar years were troublesome for all the powers that would play major roles in World War II. For Britain and the United States, where significant strategic thinking did occur, tight budgets and institutional prejudice combined to see airpower advance only incrementally--except in the critical area of theory. Germany, on the other hand, forbidden by the Treaty of Versailles even to have an air force, secretly conspired with erstwhile foe Russia to develop improved aircraft designs and doctrine, although of almost exclusively tactical dimensions. Wraps came off the Luftwaffe only in 1935.

The Soviets, recovering from the back-to-back devastation of World War I and the civil war and held in great suspicion worldwide, wrestled with every aspect of airpower. Nevertheless, internal obstacles of Olympian proportions, including competing industrial priorities, the institutional handicaps of totalitarian society (which Germany, Italy, and Japan shared, if to a lesser degree), and the great purges, prevented the Soviets from developing large-scale, long-range airpower. They did, however, after a slow, brutal start, excel at tactical aviation.

Boyne contends that World War II strategic airpower was "generally characterized by wasted effort and false starts." Despite high hopes from all quarters, airpower simply did not provide the range, accuracy, or bomb loads necessary to realize the prophecies of Giulio Douhet, Billy Mitchell, and others. Long-held theoretical constructs regarding the effectiveness of bombing--72 deaths per ton of bombs dropped--were never attained until the atomic bomb, although conventional B-29 bombing came close.

*Clash of Wings* emphasizes the narrow margin of RAF victory during the Battle of Britain, presenting a marvelous account of aircraft, technology, personalities, and plans. The book also highlights the superficial and short-lived

excellence of early Japanese air successes and the slow allied approach to attaining air superiority through a combination of industrial capacity and more innovative tactics and strategy.

Readers looking for nonstop anecdotes will be particularly pleased: the twin-engined Junkers 86 was originally produced with diesel engines; the Norwegians used 3000 reindeer to trample snow on an airfield near Trondheim during the German invasion so air operations could continue; the Luftwaffe had a higher accident rate than other air forces; shortages were so severe by war's end, horses towed Me-262 jets into takeoff positions to save taxiing fuel; Antwerp received 20 percent more V-2 hits than London; peak Luftwaffe strength was 6000 aircraft, in June 1943.

But Boyne does far more than simply supply a few high-level declarations bolstered by dozens of bewitching details and countless "snapshots of rampant heroism." Besides providing in-depth treatment of American, British, German, and Japanese airpower, he devotes considerable attention to Soviet and Italian airpower, largely neglected if not dismissed outright in other "comprehensive" treatments.

Only the United States produced more aircraft than the Soviet Union during World War II. And if rigid tactics and leadership generally characterized the Soviet air force, close air support advocates will applaud Soviet realization of its criticality and warm to the Ilyushin Il-2 Sturmovik ground support aircraft, more of which were built during World War II--31,163--than any other aircraft in history (the Messerschmitt Bf 109's slightly larger production run, 33,000 from 1935 through 1957, included 2500 built outside Germany after the war, mostly in Spain).

Whatever caricatures rightly or wrongly apply to the Italian army in World War II, the Italian air force was a formidable if small and geographically isolated force. It flew many good aircraft and boasted brave, capable leadership and air crews at the lower levels confounded by "corrupt incompetence" at the top.

Imposing as *Clash of Wings* is, it needs more maps and photographs, especially of less-commonly recognized Italian, Japanese, and Soviet aircraft. And like so many military books, it could also use a good proofreading by a literate graduate of one of the service staff colleges.

By far the most eclectic book in this group is Alfred Price's *Sky Warriors*, an unusual treatment in 176 pages of 74 years of air war vignettes, from Zeppelin L 59 in 1917 to high-tech Gulf War wizardry in 1991. *Sky Warriors* opens with a fascinating account of the longest air combat mission in history, the 95-hour abortive attempt in November 1917 to resupply forces in German East Africa (now Tanzania) by Zeppelin. It devotes ten chapters to World War II, ranging from contests as singular as the Battle of Britain to those of almost footnote nature, such as the first jet reconnaissance in history, an Arado 234 over Normandy 2 August 1944. It includes one chapter on the air war over North Vietnam, one on the aerial refueling of the 1982 single-aircraft Britain-to-the-Falklands bombing mission, and two on the Gulf War. Air actions in the Korean War, Arab-Israeli wars, and India-Pakistan wars are not addressed at all. *Sky Warriors* assumes a high degree of familiarity with military aviation history, lack of which will find the more casual reader concluding that Price's snapshots of "scrappy actions" actually compose a disjointed array of aviation non sequiturs.

Eric Hammel's *Air War Europa* is a day-by-day account of the American air war against Germany. Less effective than *Clash of Wings* in addressing the comprehensive picture of Allied and Axis airpower in Europe, Hammel's work nevertheless provides a wealth of detailed, engrossing information, from a USAAF sergeant pilot's air-to-air victories to thousand-bomber raids. And although a chronology, *Air War Europa* still provides the sense, however pedestrian and unsupported by charts or tables, of growing Allied and ebbing Axis strength.

Richard Davis's *Carl A. Spaatz and the Air War in Europe*, a dissertation converted to a biography, is by far the most scholarly of these books. Well-researched, clearly written, and filled with excellent photos, organizational charts, and maps, it is a special gem. More than just a thorough, insightful handling of Spaatz, an officer whom General Eisenhower rated in 1945 as equal to Omar Bradley in terms of value to the war in Europe, Davis's work is an excellent treatment of points of strategic agreement and disagreement between the USAAF and RAF in the European theater.

This book is not for the faint at heart. At 808 pages, including 30 appendices and 57 pages of notes, it is no thumbnail sketch of man, mission, or era. Because Spaatz and the history of Army aviation are so inseparable--indeed, Spaatz did



not merely live through the development of doctrine, strategy, tactics, aircraft, and crew training but was intimately involved in every facet of them--neither can be examined without full treatment of the other.

Thus, Davis presents Carl "Tooe" Spaatz (the nickname was from a resemblance to West Point upperclassman Francis Toohy) against the splendidly recalled backdrop of the American Army in general and Army aviation in particular from 1910 through the opening of World War II. Spaatz's aviation experience began with watching Glenn Curtiss fly over West Point in 1910. He joined the Signal Corps Air Service in 1915 after a year in the infantry, shot down three German planes during World War I, switched to bombers between the wars, and flew assorted experimental aircraft including the famous "?" during its 1929 record-breaking endurance flight. Carl Spaatz and US Army airpower are inseparable.

As Davis covers in detail, the first of Spaatz's two great contributions to Allied victory in Europe was his extensive counter-air campaign against the Luftwaffe from January to May 1944. This not only "emasculated" German Fighter Command by the time of the Normandy invasion but provided the added benefit of reducing Luftwaffe ability to defend German industry from American daylight bombing raids.

Following a long policy struggle, Spaatz then launched a determined campaign against the German oil industry, depriving both Luftwaffe and Wehrmacht of fuel. Skeptics, particularly the British, favored attacking the German transportation network instead, which was vigorously assaulted after the oil industry was devastated. Here was the near vindication of modern airpower's long-theorized but hitherto unrealized potential--having a decisive effect on a war's outcome.

Although earlier bombing efforts had correctly sought critical German targets--ball bearing production and Rumanian oil refineries in 1943, for example--they were relatively small, involving 200 to 300 aircraft, and damage assessments were woefully overestimated. The latter surely influenced decisions not to follow up the early raids.

Spaatz, however, was more than just an ardent, skilled airpower advocate (before Pearl Harbor, he was Chief of Air Corps Plans and later Chief of the Air Staff). As Commander of US Strategic Air Forces in Europe (USSTAF) comprising the Eighth and Fifteenth Air Forces, Spaatz not only had to manage enormous quantities of airpower but function effectively in theater-level deliberations with other Allied air and ground commanders. He got along well with and enjoyed the confidence of RAF Air Marshals Portal and Tedder. Late in the war, he proved himself particularly adept at defusing tensions with Switzerland over accidental but repeated US bombings of Swiss cities.

Still, brilliant and prescient that he was, one wonders, based on his appearance and demeanor alone, whether a Carl Spaatz would make major today, let alone go on to command the largest American air forces in history.

Unlike the Luftwaffe, and to a lesser degree, the Italian air force, the British Royal Air Force and US Army Air Corps (later US Army Air Forces) were blessed with service chiefs who not only believed passionately in airpower but who were skilled in their approaches to developing and wielding it. The Luftwaffe, however, with eight chiefs of staff in 12 years and presided over by the mercurial mediocrity Hermann Goering, never had anyone able to put everything together--strategy, doctrine, aircraft types, planning, and production. Bekker, Boyne, Davis, and Hammel reveal how and why Germany never developed strategic airpower and how and why the United States in particular did.

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**The Reviewer:** Lieutenant Colonel Wayne A. Silkett, USA Ret., served in Vietnam, in Berlin, at SHAPE in Belgium, and on the faculties of the US Air Force Academy and the US Army War College.

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## Review Essay

### Vietnam: The Fighting Flares Again

**PAUL F. BRAIM**

The recent publication of an apologium, *In Retrospect: The Tragedy and Lessons of Vietnam*, by former US Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara, has renewed the verbal barrages over Vietnam, bringing to the surface again emotions that have never entirely subsided. McNamara's thesis is that prosecution of the limited war in Vietnam by the leadership of the Kennedy and Johnson administrations was "wrong, terribly wrong," and "we owe it to future generations to explain why" the decisions on the war were made. McNamara is correct on two counts: "Incremental Escalation" was a terribly inadequate strategy, and yes, we should learn from this war.

Certainly McNamara shoulders a significant part of the blame for our failure in Vietnam. This memoir, after a self-congratulatory summary of McNamara's rise to national prominence, centers on his participation in directing the war in Vietnam--on the proposals, discussions, arguments, and decisions that initiated and escalated US military support of the Republic of Vietnam. McNamara describes well the activism and naïveté of the Kennedy Administration as it launched a crusade to establish a democratic nation in Vietnam, in part to offset earlier failures in international affairs. During the Johnson Administration, McNamara and his associates became more professional in their handling of the war, but they were constrained by a President who gave greater priority to the domestic "War on Poverty" than to the real war in Vietnam. The author makes the cogent point that the crowding of multiple crises into the daily workload of the cabinet officers often made their recommendations on Vietnam palliative rather than proactive. He describes candidly his leadership in the buildup, his doubts about the commitment as early as 1965, and his conclusion by 1967 that the United States should withdraw. As to why he did not act on his convictions, McNamara responds that he was a team player, making the best of the decisions of Presidents who were trying to achieve victory.

These intimate details--the personal McNamara notes heretofore unavailable to researchers--constitute a valuable addition to the historical record of this conflict. The author deserves credit for providing this memoir (although hardly the encomium provided by Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., on the dust jacket). He is certainly "bright" enough to have known that he would draw more criticism than praise for this book, and reviews from both the political left and right have been sharply critical.

McNamara says he failed, and he convinces this reviewer, whose four tours of duty in Vietnam made convincing him rather easy. McNamara believes "we" failed because we underestimated the enormity of the challenge, we backed an unpopular, undemocratic government, and we failed to gain the approval of the American people for the commitment. However, the author cannot bring himself to the realization that he and his staff of technocrats failed primarily because they sought a mathematical formula to end the war under favorable circumstances. The lessons McNamara believes we should have learned are these: US leadership should plan better in the future, should insure that future military commitments are in our interests, should make future commitments as part of a multinational force, preferably under the United Nations, and should spend more for foreign aid and less for defense. McNamara's conclusions are unsurprising; however, after a careful re-reading of his book, this reviewer could find little evidence supporting these conclusions.

Why did McNamara choose to write this book at this time? Perhaps the memoir is in the nature of a catharsis. If it is an attempt at expiation, however, the author will receive no absolution from this reviewer. He would do better to make his apology in person at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, although it is unlikely that many of the disabled, the missing, the former POWs, or the still-grieving families of the dead would be sympathetic. McNamara's departure from the

Pentagon in 1968 was concomitant with the rupture of the Democratic Party, when "protest liberals" seized control of that party from the "internationalists." Protestors took to the streets, and McNamara removed himself from the scene; he has seemingly been trying to regain credibility within the liberal elite ever since. When President Clinton was asked by a reporter whether, having protested against the war, he felt "vindicated" by McNamara's book, he said that he did. In that light, perhaps this book at this time may be an attempt to aid a national political party in some distress.

Although comments by warriors and protestors alike have focused attention upon McNamara's book for the present, it is important to note the recent works of scholars who are producing more dispassionate, balanced analyses on Vietnam.

In the light of post-Cold War realities, some writers have suggested that the war in Vietnam should be considered as one long and bitter campaign in the war for containment of communism, which the Free World ultimately won. This is the theme of the measured analysis by Dr. William J. Duiker in his book *U.S. Containment Policy and the Conflict in Indochina*. Duiker, Professor of East Asian History at Penn State University, clearly establishes President Kennedy as the agent of irrevocable commitment of the United States to the security of the Republic of Vietnam. Fearful of being charged with losing Asia to communism, Kennedy committed this nation to fighting a war that ultimately required a greater degree of sacrifice than our people were willing to make. Kennedy and his associates directed the war in an ad-hoc fashion, tying US prestige to victory under circumstances where victory was doubtful from the start, according to Duiker. They entered upon the war in ignorance, shortsightedness, a degree of hubris, and a tendency to see the United States as representing truth and goodness. Duiker finds no evidence that Kennedy was considering withdrawal from Vietnam at the time of his death. (McNamara, conversely, believes it is "highly probable that, had President Kennedy lived, he would have pulled us out of Vietnam.") Duiker concludes with an admonition against trying to apply the lessons of Vietnam to future wars.

Dr. Richard A. Hunt, a historian in the US Army's Center of Military History, has written *Pacification: The American Struggle for Vietnam's Hearts and Minds*, a comprehensive history of the US-led struggle for the loyalty of the people of South Vietnam. Defining pacification as programs of social and economic reform accompanied by security, Hunt states that applying this politico-military program to Vietnam was the greatest challenge for the United States, and the greatest failure.

President Kennedy was fascinated by the US Army's Special Forces, whom he saw as uniquely qualified to conduct pacification, or "counterinsurgency." The activism of the Kennedy team enforced an optimism throughout the chain of command of the various programs, which in turn denied Kennedy and later Presidents reports of failure. Advisors to the Vietnamese leaders were increasingly pressed to report details of success in security and social change. Denied the command authority required to create the conditions that would effect change, the advisors were in an impossible situation. The succession of pacification programs--Agrovilles, Strategic Hamlets, Revolutionary Development, and related efforts--were consequently poorly coordinated bureaucratic struggles to accomplish an esoteric social change.

President Johnson described pacification as the "gut issue in this war." President Nixon emphasized pacification as the means to allow the United States to withdraw from Vietnam. Hunt concludes that, despite partial and temporary successes, pacification failed to reach any of its goals. Could pacification in Vietnam have succeeded if given more time? Hunt responds in the negative, adding that the question is moot because the American people were in no mood to allow more time to prosecute an already extended war.

Arguably the most successful of the US pacification efforts in Vietnam was the Combined Action Program (CAP) of the US Marines, described by Al Hemingway in his book *Our War Was Different: Marine Combined Action Platoons in Vietnam*. Hemingway, a Marine veteran of the war and a senior editor of *Vietnam* magazine, describes the tasks given to squads of relatively junior Marines selected for this duty: Live in the hamlets with the people, and train and conduct operations with the Self Defense Forces to secure the hamlets. American advisors to the Vietnamese paramilitary forces also trained village defense forces, but the CAP teams remained in the hamlets, while most advisors--and most of the Vietnamese leaders they advised--operated out of relatively secure headquarters. The main reason for the unique success of the CAP program was the reason the other programs failed: security of the people in the far hamlets at night. Hemingway believes the CAP disrupted the operations of the Viet Cong but did not destroy their infrastructure. The CAP operated with Popular Forces who were inadequately trained, poorly armed, poorly and

irregularly paid, and poorly supported by corrupt government officials. Weaknesses of the CAP Marines were the language barrier and inadequate training for the job. As the war in Vietnam became more conventional after Tet 1968, the Marine command reluctantly turned to the more demanding task of defeating the regular forces of North Vietnam. The legacy of CAP, as with that of civic action conducted by other forces, is a record of limited, fragile success in "winning the hearts and minds" by the close association of Americans with the Vietnamese peasantry.

Frustrated by their failure to win the loyalty of the Vietnamese to their programs for saving South Vietnam from communism, American leaders tried to win with US conventional forces and tactics. Among the operational histories of American organizations fighting in Vietnam, Dr. Eric Bergerud's *Red Thunder, Tropic Lightning* is a recent example. Portraying the "world of a combat division in Vietnam" through the story of the 25th Infantry Division (the Tropic Lightning), Bergerud creates a revealing picture of their grueling experience. The soldiers tell of "thrashing the bush," suffering the heat, the insects, and the ambushes of an enemy who could seldom be seen. Offsetting these travails are descriptions of organizational effectiveness in swift airmobile maneuver--and a certain pride in unit membership and shared experience which distinguishes veterans of ground combat from other mortals. The division's soldiers were contemptuous of the performance of their allies in the Army of the Republic of Vietnam; they were equally critical of those in Washington controlling and limiting the war, of the media, and of protestors back home. Like soldiers in other American wars, the GIs admired the toughness of their main enemy, the North Vietnamese soldier. As the war extended into 1969, problems related to declining morale and indiscipline increased. The soldiers acknowledged drug use, but--and this is worthy of note--they stated that such use was confined to the rear, to the areas where boredom was the biggest enemy. Although the soldiers expressed a cynicism about their experience and its value, most were defensively proud that they had served their country, and their anger was directed at those who denigrated that service.

Dr. George C. Herring's *LBJ and Vietnam: A Different Kind of War* continues the theme of frustration with an incisive examination of President Johnson's direction of the war. Herring, Alumni Professor of History at the University of Kentucky, has published previous best-selling histories on the Vietnam War. In this volume, he encapsulates the drives, the moods, and the motivations of Johnson, a President who was increasingly frustrated by entrapment in a war with a "little fourth-rate country" half-a-world away from Washington. Herring reveals Johnson's passion for secrecy, for loyalty, and for enforcing consensus among his senior advisors. A consummate politician and a highly successful leader of legislatures, Johnson was uncomfortable in his role as the commander of the US armed forces, and he mistrusted his military subordinates more than he did his civil aides. According to Herring, Johnson never formulated a strategy for winning in Vietnam, nor even for controlling the major commitment of American combat power which he initiated. He politicized the military chain of command, yet refused to take the advice of his military leaders when their recommendations ran contrary to his gut feelings. He hoped to crown his years in public life by winning the War on Poverty. In the end, the war in Vietnam, which Johnson tried to keep on the back burner, destroyed his presidency.

The military leader most responsible for Vietnam during the Johnson years is the subject of *Westmoreland: A Biography of General William C. Westmoreland*, by Samuel Zaffiri. This lightweight biography reveals considerable new information about and by Westmoreland. It shows him at the apogee of his service, appearing before a cheering joint session of the Congress; it carries the story through to the nadir of Westmoreland's life, the libel suit against CBS. Zaffiri, who obviously admires the general (as do many who served under him, including this reviewer), displays Westmoreland as more perspicacious about the problems of Vietnam than heretofore revealed. The Westmoreland in this book is too often right on matters about which the record shows everybody who was anybody to have been wrong. The book includes too many castigations of Westmoreland's colleagues, and it shows him to be more narrow than most of us know him to be. Loosely written and poorly edited, this book does no credit to its subject. Westmoreland is a tragic figure in American military history. He deserves great credit for slowing the sweep of communism in Vietnam, gaining time for the other free nations of Southeast Asia to build their defenses. That is his major contribution.

Autobiographies abound on service in Vietnam. Many reveal acts of heroism, some defying the logic of that battlefield. Stories of the "I was there" category appear to be declining in number. One waits with unabated breath for the capstone book: *I Was the Last Postal Clerk in Saigon*.

One of the more interesting autobiographies is Howard R. Simpson's *Tiger in the Barbed Wire: An American in Vietnam, 1952-1991*. A foreign service officer and journalist, Simpson's book covers Vietnam from the fall of the

French to the recent opening of communist Vietnam to the outside world. Like "Pug" Henry in *Winds of War*, Simpson dropped in upon many decisive actions spread over considerable time and space. He saw and appreciated the end of French colonialism in Southeast Asia; he watched the United States, struggling to support a corrupt South Vietnamese government, try to turn the conflict into a conventional war. He watched from afar as the United States turned the war over to a Vietnamese army disinclined to fight. Returning to a communist Vietnam in 1991, he saw it reemerging into world trade and association. The story is instructive, but in the "I told you so" vein.

It is appropriate to mention also the genre of biographies of women who served in Vietnam. Among the newest is *American Daughter Gone to War: On the Front Lines with an Army Nurse in Vietnam*, by Winnie Smith. The author, who served as a nurse in hospitals that treated recently wounded servicemen, was too young and idealistic to accept easily the disfigurement and death of young soldiers whom she treated and befriended. The emotional trauma that resulted for Smith, and the scars that she continues to bear, led her into activism for veterans rights and into tearful associations with veterans who had been denied government medical treatment and financial support. It is no discredit to her service and personal sacrifice to opine that some of her fellow activists appear, 20-plus years after the war, to have achieved the status of "professional veterans."

As the Vietnam generation passes into late middle age, a consensus appears to be developing on the history and legacy of the war in Vietnam. The great opus on this conflict, however, remains to be written.

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**The Reviewer:** Colonel Paul F. Braim, USA Ret., is Professor of History at Embry Riddle University. He holds a Ph.D. from the University of Delaware and has written and lectured on military history and military affairs.

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Reviewed 10 November 1997. Please send comments or corrections to [carl\\_Parameters@conus.army.mil](mailto:carl_Parameters@conus.army.mil).