

Featured Review

KILL OR CAPTURE: How a Special Operations Task Force Took Down a Notorious Al Qaeda Terrorist, Matthew Alexander, St. Martin's Press, NY, 2011, 292 pages, \$25.99.

Contrary to myth, most U.S. military detention facilities did not resort to brutal interrogation methods during the first years of our nation's conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq. In fact, the popular perception that they did is wildly inaccurate. However, some facilities tragically did resort to such methods, including the now notorious examples of Guantanamo Bay, Abu Ghraib, and Bagram. In Iraq, many of the facilities employing so-called "enhanced" interrogation techniques were special operations facilities. Incredibly, even after the Abu Ghraib scandal broke, the facility run by the elite Special Mission Unit in Iraq continued to permit more of these techniques than had been allowed even at Abu Ghraib.

It was into a detention center run by this Special Mission Unit that a U.S. Air Force major strode in early in 2006. Although interrogation techniques derived from U.S. military survival, evasion, resistance and escape (SERE) schools were no longer officially promulgated within this unit, these harsh techniques were all that many of its interrogators understood. Consequently, within this detention center, legally acceptable doctrinal approaches were consistently applied in the harshest possible manner.

The major, a school-trained interrogator with a significant background in law enforcement, knew that the unit's interrogators had it wrong. So, he set out to teach them the value of doctrinal, rapport-based interrogation approaches that can be truly enhanced, not by brute

force, but by the cunning application of traditional law enforcement techniques.

Writing under the pseudonym of "Matthew Alexander," this leader has penned two memoirs that are essential reading for anyone wishing to understand how real (and not pseudo) interrogators think and operate.

In his first memoir, *How to Break a Terrorist*, Alexander described how he used the power of personal example to teach his team that they could be far more effective if they convinced (rather than coerced) their sources to talk. Thanks to his good efforts—and to those he led—his unit quickly began to produce results. Most notably, his team coaxed intelligence from sources that led to the successful U.S. air strike against Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, leader of Al-Qaeda in Iraq. At the time, Zarqawi was the most wanted man of coalition forces in Iraq. Zarqawi's death proved a terrible psychological blow to the terrorist organization he led, especially since Zarqawi had long cultivated a reputation for invincibility among his followers.

Alexander's newly published second memoir, *Kill or Capture*, begins where *How to Break a Terrorist* left off. Zarqawi is dead, and Al-Qaeda in Iraq has been forced out of the Baghdad and Al Anbar governorates and is regrouping in northern Iraq. Alexander requested to leave the main detention facility of the Special Mission Unit and head north as part of a two-man mobile interrogation team in support of a larger raid team. His request was granted.

What followed is an exciting tale told in a clear, clipped manner that would make Papa Hemmingway proud. Combat veterans will recognize Alexander's simple, emotive descriptions of combat operations as authentic. Many counterinsurgents

will also relate to the sinking feeling Alexander describes at the start of the story when his team mistakenly releases their main Al-Qaeda quarry, the elusive "Zafar," head of Al-Qaeda operations in northern Iraq. Yes, like a rollercoaster, the story's ultimate destination is known. (Despite his early lucky escape, Zafar does not stand a chance.) But knowing this does not make the ride any less thrilling.

Zafar's capture, like Zarqawi's death, was a terrific blow to Al-Qaeda in Iraq. Although not the cause of the "Sunni Awakening" (which had already begun), the forced removal of these two terrorist leaders from power emboldened more Sunnis to take arms against the much-feared terrorist organization.

However, as important as these intelligence successes were to the coalition cause in Iraq, more important to history are the lessons Alexander's story offers to all Americans. One lesson is that harsh interrogation methods produce inferior intelligence, and those who claim that such methods work well are dangerously ignorant.

Skilled, professional interrogators understand that prisoners are not machines that we can force to tell the truth if only we can find the right, scientifically measurable lever and pull it. Instead, prisoners are human beings who, under even great physical duress, retain the power within their private mental realms to choose to tell the truth or not. To get people to tell the truth, you have to convince them that they should. Herein lies the art and skill of real interrogators.

Alexander's memoirs argue convincingly for keeping America's interrogators on the moral high ground. Alexander and his interrogators were not only amazingly successful; they avoided the scandals that have plagued too many U.S. units during our country's

recent conflicts abroad. Of these scandals, most grievous has been the damage caused by allegations of torture. In particular, Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo not only decreased support for America's foreign wars at home, but these twin scandals were recruitment boons for our jihadist enemies. As Alexander writes, "I learned in Iraq that the number one reason foreign fighters flocked there to fight were the abuses carried out at Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo."

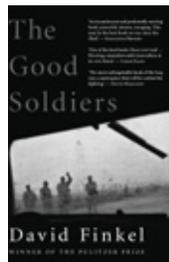
But the cost of these scandals may run deeper still than the deaths of thousands in America's current wars. Under the questionable "legal" cover provided by well-intentioned (but profoundly ignorant) policymakers and lawyers, some interrogators essentially tortured many prisoners, and by so doing, endangered our nation's very soul. This has dealt a severe blow to our collective understanding of who we are—our core belief that America must strive to set a positive example for others to follow. As Alexander teaches us, "Murderers like Zarqawi can kill us, but they can't force us to change who we are. We can only do that to ourselves." Is it permanent, the grave damage that various torture scandals have dealt to the lofty ideals we Americans hold for ourselves? Sadly, we will not know the answer to this question until we witness how future U.S. service members wage war on their own battlefields.

How to Break a Terrorist is already a classic military memoir. *Kill or Capture* deserves to be as well. Leaders or interrogators who want to be good at what they do should (and probably will) read these two books. But Alexander's memoirs also contain valuable lessons for all students of war, history, and the American experience. Indeed, any American could profit from reading these books, not just for the lessons they offer, but because they are a sheer pleasure to read. Although works of weighty historical importance, they read as quickly and easily as page-turning suspense novels.

In short, read *Kill or Capture* and its antecedent, *How to Break a Terrorist*. You will find both a thrilling ride, and perhaps even (as I believe I did), grow in wisdom as a result.

Major Douglas A. Pryer, USA, Haverfordwest, UK: Author, *The Fight for the High Ground: the U.S. Army and Interrogation During Operation Iraqi Freedom, May 2003 – April 2004*

Featured Review



THE GOOD SOLDIERS, David Finkel, Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, New York, 2009, 285 pages, \$26.00.

David Finkel's *The Good Soldiers* is a heart-rending account of an American infantry battalion at war. It is an eyewitness report of the Iraq war shorn of its glory and seen over the gun sight of an M-4 rifle, through the windshield of a Humvee, and in the eyes of the dead and wounded—the latter often sacrificing more than the American public realizes. The author brings often unbearable soldier stories into full view.

Finkel does a good job of capturing the soldiers' sacrifices comprehensively and vividly, showing us the futility of some of their daily missions, the camaraderie generated by their experiences, and their heroism. The surviving heroes of the 2-16th Infantry Battalion suffered inordinately from their survival—bad dreams, strange tics, mental issues, and worse.

The author also explores the burden of command—its challenges, aspirations, frustrations, and successes—through the person of Lieutenant Colonel Ralph Kauzlarich, who knows that his battalion has won at the end of his tour, but also that it had seen enough.

The author, a Pulitzer Prize winner with an eye for both the pathos and

courage found on the battlefield, has impeccable writing credentials, and was embedded with the 800-man unit in Rustamiyah, Iraq, for eight months. This is not a dry-eye book. Yet, it is a must read for all U.S. soldiers and policymakers. The latter should look through the appendix with its roster of soldiers, note the Purple Heart recipients, and pause over the pictures of the battalion's 14 dead American soldiers. The 2-16th Infantry made a difference, but it paid a steep price.

Kevin D. Stringer, Ph.D., Zurich, Switzerland

HOW TERRORISM ENDS: Understanding the Decline and Demise of Terrorist Campaigns, Audrey Kurth Cronin, Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ, 2009, 206 pages, \$29.95.

How Terrorism Ends lays out the intellectual framework and crucial points that lead to the demise of many terrorists organizations, focusing on how terrorist organizations end and how nations might develop strategies and goals that could help lead to that end. One of Cronin's major points is that *fewer than five percent of terrorist campaigns succeed*. Killing civilians does not seem to be a promising way to achieve political aims.

Cronin addresses six ways in which terrorist organizations can end—capturing or killing the group's leader, entering a legitimate political process, achieving the group's aims, implosion, or loss of the group's public support, defeat by brute force, and transition from terrorism to another form of violence.

Some of Cronin's findings are quite interesting. For example, most terrorist organizations last less than eight years; killing a terrorist leader may not damage the group as much as arresting him, especially if he is humiliated before the public and sentenced to prison; states negotiate with terrorists because they want the conflict to end, while the terrorist organization often does not; and finally, terrorist organizations often fail because their violence against the civilian populace ends up provoking popular revulsion against them.

Cronin points out up front that Al-Qaeda will end without achieving its strategic goals. However, she also clearly points out that Al-Qaeda is different from most other terrorist organizations. She demonstrates the organization's strengths, resilience, methods of recruitment, means of support, and communications. Cronin then demonstrates how Al-Qaeda might come to an end.

How Terrorism Ends is comprehensive, historical, and academically rigorous. Terror campaigns might seem endless, but as Cronin has so accurately depicted, terror campaigns always end and usually not in the favor of the terrorists organization. I highly recommend the book to anyone with an interest in understanding terrorist organizations and the political and military means to defeat them.

Ken Miller, Platte City, Missouri

GOOD BOSS, BAD BOSS: How to Be the Best . . . and Learn from the Worst, Robert I. Sutton, Ph.D., Business Plus Hachette Book Group, Boston, MA, 2010, 252 Pages, \$23.99.

Good Boss, Bad Boss is a necessary read for anyone who has ever suffered through a toxic work place and wondered what he could learn from the experience. The topic of toxic leadership provides many lively discussions across the Department of Defense, and this book adds much to the discourse. Robert Sutton is no stranger to the topic of uncivilized workplaces; his 2007 book, *The No Asshole Rule*, effectively describes survival skills for employees with bullying bosses.

The response from readers was overwhelming and *Good Boss, Bad Boss* builds on his earlier work; here he focuses on how to learn from the best practices of good bosses. Sutton has crafted an engaging and useful operator's manual on how to be a good boss, filled with practical advice pulled as much from research as from anecdotal experiences from readers and bloggers on his site *Work Matters*. The book is engaging and hard to put down. Subordinates and

bosses alike will recognize many workplace challenges depicted within these pages.

Good Boss, Bad Boss describes the effective traits of good leaders. Sutton summarizes each of these traits into simple, easily remembered concepts such as the "Attitude of Wisdom," which serves as the boundary between smart and wise bosses. "Smart bosses have the confidence to act on what they know but feel and express little doubt (in public or private) about what they believe or do. Wise bosses have the confidence to act on what they know and the humility to doubt their knowledge." The key difference is that bosses can be very intelligent, but if they lack the ability to listen to a divergent view they cannot be wise enough to learn when they have missed something important. Sutton advises, "Act on your temporary conviction as if it was a real conviction; and when you realize it is wrong, correct course quickly."

Good Boss, Bad Boss entertainingly guides the reader through the traits and best practices of good bosses and gives practical advice on how to emulate them. It would be difficult to find a better book for leader development programs at battalion and brigade levels. One might read *Good Boss, Bad Boss* in tandem with its predecessor, *The No Asshole Rule*. The book is an outstanding read that has the potential to improve military and civilian leaders and the organizations they lead.

LTC Richard A. McConnell, USA, Retired, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas

SOFT SPOTS: A Marine's Memoir of Combat and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, Clint Van Winkle, St. Martin's Press, New York, 2009, 213 pages, \$14.99.

While some war memoirs resemble classical paintings filled with scenes of heroic triumphs, Clint Van Winkle's resembles a Dali surrealist landscape, blending reality, illusions, and nightmares. As an amphibious assault vehicle section leader, Sergeant Van Winkle served

in Iraq in 2003 in Lima Company, 3rd Battalion, 1st Marines. Although he saw action at Nasiriyah, he does not take a strictly chronological approach to recounting the events. Instead, Van Winkle gives the reader a glimpse into the mind of a veteran wrestling with the meaning and affects of post-traumatic stress syndrome (PTSD) by blending the stories of combat with stories of return to civilian life. His memoir tells more of his experience of war than simply his experiences in war.

Making frequent use of literary flashback, Van Winkle's story twists and turns from the present to the past and back again, reflecting his personal struggles with the recurrent memories of war. He tells how certain sights or sounds in his post-war college days would suddenly throw his mind back into the war zone. Apprehensively intrigued by the unsettled nature and pattern of the narrative, the reader is drawn deeply into the stream of consciousness, unsure of whether or not Van Winkle is at home or in Iraq—in combat or in a nightmare. Thus, his memoirs become a literary taste of PTSD, a mental world where the dead and living coexist.

Throughout, Van Winkle turns his ire on people and organizations that only superficially support veterans. He scorns citizens who are satisfied with simply displaying yellow ribbon bumper stickers or college students who protest wars they do not understand. He speaks of his frustration at the Veterans Administration whose impersonal care and "take a pill" mentality hampers his attempts to understand and recover from his wartime experience. Turning to self-medication through alcohol, Van Winkle finds solace only among fellow combat vets. Despite these mental and emotional struggles, he achieves success in college; yet he despairs of ever finding the sense of purpose and belonging found on the battlefield. Its values and actions had become the new normal for him, hindering a complete return to the "normalcy" of the civilian world.

Van Winkle ends the memoir, hopeful, but still trapped in a war

he left but cannot leave behind. His masterful powers of description and keen sense of irony fully engage the reader's attention. The author's stories of combat spare no details but plunge the reader into the gut-wrenching scenes of death and destruction that befell friend and foe alike. He points out the paradoxes that make up war—death and freedom, camaraderie and hatred, saving life and killing. Overall, Van Winkle's memoir makes a valuable contribution to the ongoing struggle to understand PTSD. He humanizes the acronym, bringing the reader along on the tortuous mental journey and silencing those who provide cheap solutions and shallow answers to veterans' issues.

1LT Jonathan E. Newell, USAR, Amherst, New Hampshire

THE THREE CIRCLES OF WAR: Understanding the Dynamics of Conflict in Iraq, Edited by Heather S. Gregg, Hy S. Rothstein, and John Arquilla, Potomac Books, Washington, DC, 2010, 259 pages, \$60.00.

An intriguing read, *The Three Circles of War: Understanding the Dynamics of Conflict in Iraq* is a fascinating collection of writings by academicians from diverse fields with a combined total of over 100 years of military experience. Hy S. Rothstein has 26 years of service as a Special Forces officer in addition to a Ph.D. in international relations. Major Christopher Ford is a member of the Judge Advocate Corps who served from 2004 to 2005 with the 1st Calvary Division in Baghdad. Almost all contributors are associated with the Naval Postgraduate School.

With a nuanced observation of overlap, transition points, and the interplay of “three circles of war”—interstate war, civil war, and insurgency—the contributors meticulously lead the reader through their particular area of interest. The book addresses mistakes made, lessons learned, adaptations developed, problems remaining, and solutions recommended. Collectively, the

essays bring together intellect, experience, and analytical capacity.

The contributors write from within their given field of expertise on a range of topics that takes the reader from the mistake-riddled days immediately following the 2003 Iraq invasion through current attempts to formulate and execute a responsible withdrawal strategy. However, some of the book's conclusions seem like a blinding flash of the obvious.

The book analyzes the diverse groups operating within Iraq at the start of the war, including each group's interests and the complex causal relationships between each group's interests and the three, at times concurrent, types of war.

“Stabilizing Iraq” covers the initial missteps in stabilizing the country's political, economic, and security structures. Heather S. Gregg argues that a rush to implement democratic reforms (elections in particular) without first developing civic institutions to heal the ethnic divides, fueled insurgency (particularly by marginalizing Sunnis) and sowed the seed of civil war. Her extensive academic background in political science, cultural anthropology, and Islam, as well as her extensive fieldwork in both Palestine and the Balkans inform Gregg's analysis

“Understanding Our Adversary” examines how the initially dysfunctional U.S. intelligence apparatus failed to adequately prepare policymakers and senior military commanders for the complexity of cause and effect at all levels of the conflict. The section gives a frank assessment of how a search for justification for previously held objectives and means, by policy and military leaders, had at least as much of a detrimental effect on intelligence gathering and reporting, as did problems of integration and cooperation within the intelligence community itself. Another section focuses on the legal and ethical obligations incurred by invasion, occupying, and post-occupation forces.

“Measuring War and Victory” addresses the always-controversial topic of metrics, from combat-centric kinetic metrics to game

theory, as way to understand current events and predict future “shocks.” The final section outlines trends in strategic communications (grossly deficient), the development of a coherent, comprehensive strategy (after significant missteps), and a responsible withdrawal strategy.

Overall, this intriguing, in-depth analysis of “the dynamics of conflict in Iraq,” is well worth the read, although this reader wonders how amenable measures of effectiveness are to mathematical models and formulaic forecasting, as in Tarek K. Abdel-Hamid's system dynamics with multiple feedback loops, or Fox's adaptation of Nash's Game Theory.

MAJ Thomas E. Walton, Sr., USAR, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas

DRUGS AND CONTEMPORARY WARFARE, Paul Rexton Kan, foreword by Moises Naim, Potomac Books, Inc., Washington, DC, 2009, 187 pages, \$19.95.

In *Drugs and Contemporary Warfare*, Dr. Paul Rexton Kan provides unique insight regarding the role of drugs and contemporary warfare on the modern battlefield as well as in nation building situations. Although Kans is not the first to present research on the correlation between drugs and war, he provides a thorough exploration of theories applicable today. He examines the violent actors involved in the drug trade, the drugs the actors produce and distribute, how drugs enter into conflicts, and solutions to inhibit the drug trade's effect on conflict.

I enjoyed Kan's multilayered approach, especially his ability to focus on the tie between drug trafficking and war and strategies to combat drugs as a way to reduce conflict. He not only presents basic concepts but identifies four strategies that could assist in refining social, economic, and political conditions to overcome drug trade burdens.

Kan takes a complex topic, presents modern application of the concepts, and provides possible solutions that one could attempt to indirectly reduce conflict (e.g.,

by reducing the financial support warring groups receive from the drug trade). Insightful, contemporary, and applicable at all levels, this book provides information that requires the reader to reconsider past approaches to reduce global conflict.

**MAJ Misti L. Frodyma, USA,
Fort Leavenworth, Kansas**

SECURITY IN MEXICO: Implications for U.S. Policy Options, Agnes G. Schaefer, Benjamin Bahney, K. Jack Riley, RAND Corporation, 2009, 78 pages, \$29.50.

The U.S.-Mexico bilateral relationship is among America's most important. The problem is how to manage it, especially in light of the ever-worsening security situation in Mexico, encapsulate the critical issues from a binational security perspective, and offer recommendations on new approaches to some old problems.

While immigration and trade remain at the forefront of the bilateral agenda, in a concise but effective monograph, several RAND analysts focus on three priority security threats—organized crime, a category that includes narcotics trafficking and arms smuggling; illegal migration and trafficking in persons; and terrorism. What is new in this mix are the unprecedented levels of violence and audacity displayed by criminal organizations, particularly the drug trafficking organizations, which the authors contend are increasingly emboldened—committing more acts in public, targeting Mexican police forces without hesitation, and even hiring ex-special forces members from the Mexican military. These developments are well known, having prompted increasing outrage and public condemnation, as well as a call to action from both heads of state.

In response to these burgeoning threats, the authors recommend three broad policy options for consideration by the Obama administration: increased engagement with Mexico, maintaining current levels of aid

and support, and retrenchment from the status quo. Recent dialogue has centered on variations of the first two options, while there is little talk of pulling back. In fact, most observers say “more, faster, wider, and deeper” with regard to the amount, speed of application, and breadth and depth of U.S. aid to Mexico.

The monograph is a model of organization and simplicity. Particularly useful are scene-setting chapters dealing with the current security situation in Mexico, along with useful synopses of current levels of U.S. support and the Mexican government's response. The policy options give decision makers clear choices. The study's conclusions and recommendations are equally forceful.

Security in Mexico is highly recommended to those desiring a synopsis of key and current national security issues affecting the U.S.-Mexico bilateral relationship, along with a menu of possible policy approaches to addressing them. It should be of interest to U.S. policymakers, as well as students of U.S.-Latin American affairs.

**Mark Montesclaros,
Fort Gordon, Georgia**

NONPROLIFERATION NORMS: Why States Choose Nuclear Restraint, Maria Rost Rublee, University of Georgia Press, Athens, GA, 2009, 297 pages, \$22.95.

Nonproliferation Norms is a theoretical and analytical study in nuclear decision making, using social psychology as a means of evaluating states' choices in the interactive and dynamic global environment. Maria Rost Rublee, a lecturer at the University of Auckland, is a former intelligence officer in the Defense Intelligence Agency. Her analyses of the democratic societies in Japan, Sweden, and Germany are complete and informative, giving the reader a comprehensive background and understanding of the decision-making dynamics involved in these countries.

By means of comparison between three theories of international rela-

tions dynamics, the author analyzes the tangible evidence surrounding the evolutions of five states' nuclear weapons programs. First, she explores the lens of “realism” and the implications of state independence and self-determination to create security, potentially through acquisition of nuclear weapons to offset national threats. The second theory, “neoliberal institutionalism,” considers nonproliferation as a cooperative move to achieve lower transaction costs and increase transparency, where states benefit by technology transfer and international assistance with peaceful scientific nuclear programs, which outweigh the costs of sole (rogue) development. Finally, Rublee examines each of the five states' nuclear programs through “constructivism,” her central premise, by which she investigates internal and international social environments, with roles and norms established by the nonproliferation community, which enforces states to conform to disarmament ideals.

However, her presupposition of constructivism as an encompassing model overlooks a fundamental realism aspect: *internal* threats to state security, particularly in dictatorships and authoritarian regimes. Specifically, Egypt and Libya, two state governments that were the progeny of military coups in 1954 and 1969, respectively, are still susceptible to violent internal conflict. Both states previously pursued nuclear armament programs, only to later abandon their efforts and investments. Rublee attributes the cause as their desire to conform to international nonproliferation norms, whereas the truth is probably closer to a theory proposed by game-theorist and Nobel Laureate economist Thomas C. Schelling, that the dictator must eventually entrust the nuclear weapons to his military.

Nuclear weapons, by strategic necessity, are located far from the capital cities so as not to invite a preemptive or second-strike attack onto the seat of government and large population centers. The keys would be in the hands of military officials,

who would have autonomous control of the weapons, permitting retaliation if the dictator dies in an attack. Thus, initial state interest while beginning a nuclear weapons program transforms into concern and suspicion as leaders approach their goal and must decide who is to be trusted with the ultimate military power in their country. Once the dictator decides to abandon nuclear arms in order to restore internal security, all threats thereafter to continue nuclear weapons development are actually deceptions calculated to gain international concessions during the transition into the nonproliferation community, and to offset the previously incurred development costs. Most importantly, this entire deductive process is implicit and restricted to the highest levels of the state, given that an articulated suspicion of a coup could become a self-fulfilling prophecy.

As a theoretical investigation of decision making, Rublee's work is worthwhile to the defense community as a review in nuclear development or restraint within democratic societies, but is less engaging as a comprehensive study. Additionally, the book is written to facilitate single chapter or subchapter use, which can be useful in area studies as each section covers all the relevant history in detail, but becomes repetitive as a beginning-to-end read. For modeling authoritarian states, the reader should include Thomas Schelling's essays, "Who Will Have the Bomb?" and "Thinking about Nuclear Terrorism" from his compilation *Choice and Consequence*, to facilitate a thorough consideration of the dynamics within nuclear program decision making.

**MAJ Orrin Stitt, USA,
Fort Leavenworth, Kansas**

NO SURE VICTORY: Measuring U.S. Army Effectiveness and Progress in the Vietnam War, Gregory A. Daddis, Oxford University Press, Oxford and New York, 2011, 334 pages, \$34.95.

Measuring effectiveness over time is a challenging problem,

particularly when the subject is counterinsurgency, with its focus on highly subjective factors, such as the population's support for a government. Thus, even if one has the correct objectives in mind, it may be difficult to develop objective means of measuring their achievement.

Colonel Gregory Daddis, a history professor at the U.S. Military Academy, has examined this problem at length as it applied to our involvement in Vietnam. He traces the use and misuse of a wide variety of metrics, ranging from a simple "body count" of enemy dead to the 157 questions of the 1969 "System for Evaluating Effectiveness of the Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces."

Daddis's conclusion is that the U.S. military drowned in overwhelming amounts of data, which it used selectively to justify policies ranging from vindicating the airmobile concept to "proving" the success of Vietnamization.

The most common tendency was, of course, to use objective kinetic factors such as body count and downplay attempts to measure the hearts and minds of the Vietnamese populace. The author attributes this to American inability to understand insurgency, but is careful to explain other factors. For example, he describes the logic of General William Westmoreland, the overall U.S. commander from 1964 to 1968, who believed that he had to attrit large enemy units before addressing the needs of the population. However, Daddis also notes that figures such as body count were often the only way for officers to show progress during the brief tenure of their unit commands, whereas progress in pacification might well be measured in decades. In fact, he repeatedly suggests that military leaders believed that effort must equate to progress, without measuring the actual results.

Daddis explores the perceptions of career soldiers concerning impediments to American victory. In this regard, he contends that, during the mid-1960s, many soldiers perceived politician-imposed restrictions as the main obstacle. Later in the conflict,

the author argues, soldiers did not understand the lack of public support for the war, and therefore blamed the allegedly poor quality of draftees from a "permissive society" for a lack of success.

Daddis is undoubtedly correct that the Army created inequities and discontent by sending the least-educated, lowest-scoring troops to combat units while assigning soldiers that are more educated to technical positions. However, he repeatedly insists that the lowest-scoring soldiers, "Project 100,000" troops, learned and performed as well as their peers in Vietnam. This was probably true for those who actually reached Vietnam, but it overlooks the disproportionately large number of Project 100,000 troops that had great difficulty completing military training prior to deployment.

No Sure Victory is a thought-provoking look at a problem that is both perennial and current. Not all readers will agree with the author's conclusions, but his comments on the difficulty of measuring effectiveness in counterinsurgency make the book essential reading for anyone concerned with our current and probable future conflicts.

**COL Jonathan M. House,
USA, Retired,
Fort Leavenworth, Kansas**

15 MINUTES: General Curtis LeMay and the Countdown to Nuclear Annihilation, L. Douglas Kenney, St. Martin's Press, New York, 2011, 352 pages, \$26.99.

15 Minutes is a remarkably readable account of the complexities that confronted General Curtis LeMay and his Strategic Air Command during the Cold War. On the one hand, it impresses upon the reader just how unwinnable a nuclear war would have been. On the other hand, it illustrates that, if we were to fight such a war, it would leave us no time for contemplation. Strategic Air Command would have had to launch over 1,500 bombers in 15 minutes. The president of the United States would have had to evacuate to a "safe" haven in 15 minutes. A

survivable airborne communications network would have had to become operational in 15 minutes. In short, we would have to take the actions required to transform the United States from sole loser of the war to merely a mutual loser within 15 minutes from the time we detected a Soviet missile launch.

Author L. Douglas Keeney guides the reader on a year-by-year odyssey from 1950 through 1968 by means of an unlikely literary device: The entire work is a series of vignettes. Some of them are accounts of official activities, others are accounts of media reports, and still other accounts are poignantly personal. Often the vignettes have no ostensible connection with each other. Indeed, early on in the book, the reader might wonder how this or that vignette is topical at all. For that matter, the significance of even the “15 minutes” motif is far from obvious at the outset. However, as one sojourns with Keeney through the Cold War, the vignettes become discernible as threads interwoven into an incredibly complex tapestry.

As a result, the picture of life during the Cold War (as viewed from the perspective of one whose life is circumscribed by LeMay’s Strategic Air Command) gradually unfolds in much the same way it likely would have for one experiencing the Cold War first hand: accumulating bits and pieces of information about the nuclear world in all of its dimensions with every passing day—from the workplace, from the news, from casual family conversations around the dining room table, every vignette inviting a new challenge to some old assumption, each passing year requiring some new countermeasure, some new policy, some new way to ensure the ultimately unensurable—that a nuclear war could be won without grave consequences for all involved.

If there is a punch line to *15 Minutes*, it is the dawning realization in 1968 that the Soviets now needed only 13.8 minutes to preempt action by U.S. nuclear forces. Could the United States respond after a first strike? Probably so, but no scenario

was imaginable in which ugly outcomes could be altogether avoided.

In addition to weaving a marvelous tapestry, Keeney includes an interesting photo gallery and an especially useful glossary titled “The Language of the Cold War.” The glossary alone makes *15 Minutes* a valuable work for students of the Cold War.

COL John Mark Mattox, Ph.D., Kirtland Air Force Base, New Mexico

TEARS IN THE DARKNESS, The Story of the Bataan Death March and Its Aftermath, Michael and Elizabeth M. Norman, Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, New York, 2009, 464 pages, \$30.00.

The story of the Bataan Death March has been told many times before, but never quite like this. In *Tears in the Darkness: The Story of the Bataan Death March and Its Aftermath*, Michael and Elizabeth M. Norman combine hundreds of interviews with combatants from both sides with the personal story of Ben Steele, a Montana cowboy. Steele’s cowboy lifestyle gave him an opportunity to work outdoors learning skills that would help him survive the brutal years of forced labor during captivity.

The great outdoors inspired Ben, a self-taught artist, to portray his captors, the starvation-riddled bodies of his fellow prisoners, and to recreate pictures of his Montana home through pencil drawings. The authors brilliantly use Ben’s drawings to tie together their writing and the scenes only he could depict.

Steele enlisted in the Army in 1940 at the suggestion of his mother. “You really ought to get in before they draft you,” she said. He chose the Army and one year later, on 8 December 1941, the Japanese bombed Clark Air Base in the Philippines, destroying the American air fleet (surprisingly still on the ground and unprotected) and thrusting Steele into war. Two weeks later the Japanese invaded the Bataan Peninsula. After months of fighting, the Japanese overran the starved, outnumbered,

and exhausted American forces, forcing the surrender of 76,000 American and Filipino troops. What followed was the brutality of the 66-mile “death” march (where stopping meant certain execution), the depravity and disease of POW camps, and finally the transport ships where POWs were packed like “pickles in a barrel” on their way to labor camps on the Japanese mainland.

Intertwined among the beatings, beheadings, and inhumanity are stories of courage and compassion. There are stories of Filipinos along the death march who risked punishment to slip prisoners a bite to eat or water to drink and prisoners who gave up meals of stewed mango beans and crust of burned rice to help those lying hopelessly in a POW hospital.

The authors also tell the story of the Japanese Imperial Army, what drove it to commit atrocities, and the resulting trials. Equally telling is the Normans’ description of General MacArthur’s actions in the Philippines. The Normans pull no punches when they describe MacArthur’s lame attempt to boost morale. During one radio broadcast, MacArthur told the troops that relief troops were on the way. The authors note, “MacArthur knew it was a lie—the Philippines were cutoff. Washington knew it, and so did MacArthur.”

Ultimately, a book about the human spirit, this is a story of valor, honor, and courage, in the midst of great hardship. If you read only one book about Bataan, this should be the one.

Michael E. Weaver, Lansing, Kansas

THE AGE OF AIRPOWER, Martin van Creveld, PublicAffairs, New York, 2011, 484 pages, \$35.00.

Authority on military history and strategy Martin van Creveld’s latest book, *The Age of Airpower* is compelling and insightful, yet immensely readable. The volume is a *tour de force* and a persuasive read for military planners and politicians

grappling with the merits and future utility of airpower.

For the majority of the narrative, Van Creveld investigates where airpower has come from, how it has evolved, and what it has achieved in the many wars, large and small, in which it has participated. For completeness, the study takes a far wider perspective than many other contemporary works. Naval aviation, heliborne operations, the employment of nuclear weapons, and space operations are covered in detail, as are the organizations that designed, developed, and produced the machines. However, Van Creveld avoids simply enumerating airpower's technological advances and evolving capabilities, and focuses on military effectiveness compared with sister services and against the enemy. He achieves this purpose with great skill.

Over 20 skillfully written chapters, subdivided into five mutually supportive sections ("Into The Blue, 1900-1939"; "The Greatest War Of All, 1939-1945"; "The War That Never Was, 1945-1991"; "Little Wars, 1945-2010"; and "War Amongst the People, 1898-2010"), Van Creveld expertly tweaks conventional wisdom and redefines the limits of what airpower could and did achieve via a number of pertinent and diverse historical case studies.

Those with a particular interest in counterinsurgency operations will enjoy his analysis of airpower's ability against terrorists, guerrillas, and insurgents. As we might expect from an author of Van Creveld's standing, each chapter is expertly researched, citing individual bravery, collective endeavors, seminal battles, and political realities; each combines seamlessly to provide an attention-grabbing, logical, and perceptive account. His forceful, lucid, and balanced technique will not disappoint his readers.

The Age of Airpower seeks to gaze into the future as well. The final chapter, "Conclusions: Going Down, 1945-?" paints a relatively bleak—but not unsurprising—picture for airpower enthusiasts by uncovering a number of unpalatable

realities. Fundamentally, and as the title of the chapter suggests, far from growing in utility, conventional airpower, according to Van Creveld, is firmly on the decline. Despite acknowledging technological innovations, the chapter notes that precision-guided munitions have not made fighter-bombers more effective and that airpower is not as effective in a counterinsurgency setting as some would have us believe. Highlighting cost, reaction time, and physical numbers, Van Creveld argues that while conventional airpower's star is firmly on the decline, missiles, satellites, and UAVs are increasingly taking the upper hand. Here, he is wise to mention the organizational and cultural implications of such a rapid transformation; the effects have the potential to be profound. His bottom line is that the halcyon days of airpower as a relatively dominant factor on the battlefield are fast becoming a thing of the past. Likewise, he cautions that the days of manned attack aircraft are also rapidly drawing to a close; few would disagree with his logic.

The Age of Airpower is a must read for anyone interested in airpower, but particularly military planners and politicians involved in its ongoing procurement and contemporary employment. The book has all the hallmarks of an excellent college text and has the potential to generate considerable debate among airpower enthusiasts and military professionals alike. Above all, this is a detailed, perceptive historical account that highlights the unique ability of airpower to strike distant targets at great speed without regard to geography and articulates its limitations and rapidly evolving nature.

**LTC Andrew M. Roe, Ph.D.,
British Army, Weeton,
Lancashire, United Kingdom**

GULAG BOSS: A Soviet Memoir, Fyodor Vasilevich Mochulsky, translated by Deborah Kaple, Oxford University Press, New York, 2010, 272 pages, \$29.95.

While much has been written about and by the victims of the gulags, very little has surfaced concerning the guards, administrators, and technicians who administered the vast slave labor system. This makes *Gulag Boss*, the reminiscences of a civilian engineer who volunteered to work on one of the notorious labor projects on the edge of the Arctic Circle, a rare window into how this system worked.

A product of the Soviet system, Fyodor Mochulsky graduated from a trade school in 1940, was a candidate member of the Communist Party, and went to the far north believing that the people serving time there not only deserved to be punished but were also being rehabilitated through their labor.

He soon found that the system was not all he thought it to be. In addition to ordinary criminals there were former repatriated POWs from the Winter War with Finland, Poles from what was now called the Western Ukraine, Basmachi rebels from Central Asia and Kulaks—peasants who were slightly better off than the standard dirt-poor peasant. He also rapidly learned that neither rehabilitation nor punishment was the purpose of the system. It was to provide the state free labor on projects and in conditions in which no one in their right mind would volunteer.

Mochulsky discovered that there was no one from the People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs (NKVD) assigned to administer his work unit (apparently a common problem in the gulags) and by default, he became responsible for all aspects of the slave-labor operation on the stretch of track he was building his area. At a time when failure to meet "norms" of construction could lead a charge of "wrecking" and an instant change in status from warden to prisoner, he knew he had to get things done. As a young, motivated, and conscientious leader, Mochulsky was soon meeting norms. In an example of the banality of evil, the trained railroad engineer now found himself an expert in using forced labor to build railroads and roads important to the needs of the State.

Eventually Mochulsky found himself a commissioned NKVD officer, stuck in the gulag system. It seemed to me, reading of the events almost 70 years after they played out, that the engineer had discovered that his status as an NKVD lieutenant placed him only at a slightly better position than that of the prisoners he was in charge of. Mochulsky was eventually able to “escape” by means of a reposting to the foreign ministry. In time, he would become a successful diplomat.

At the end of the book Mochulsky asks himself some very telling questions about this whole episode of his life and the system for which he worked. Overall, *Gulag Boss* is a well-told and gripping story as well as a study in ethics.

**LTC James D. Crabtree, USA,
Fort Leavenworth, Kansas**

IMMORTAL: A Military History of Iran and Its Armed Forces, Steven R. Ward, Georgetown University Press, Georgetown, Washington, DC, 2009, 380 pages, \$29.95.

The title of *Immortal* refers to soldiers who were known for their military prowess and their loyalty, the famous elite corps of the ancient Persian rulers. It also alludes to the long history of Persian and Iranian culture and the central military role it has played throughout the history of the Middle East. The author, Steven Ward, is highly qualified for the task,

having served as a CIA intelligence analyst on Iran and the Middle East, as deputy intelligence officer at the National Intelligence Council, and as a member of the National Security Council.

The book provides a long historical perspective of Iranian military culture beginning with the fabled Persian Empire founded by Cyrus the Great and continuing with the Achaemenids, Parthians, and Sassanians. It discusses the Arab invasion and Islamization of Persia, the Mongol conquests, and the emergence of the Shi'a Safavid dynasty as a force in the Islamic world that contested the dominance of the Sunni Ottoman Empire. The author also examines the significance of Iran's geography to its strategic vision and self-image—“Fortress Iran.” After a discussion of the impact of Russian and British colonialism, the emergence of oil as a strategic resource, and both World Wars, the narrative continues with a detailed account of the U.S. relationship with the Pahlavi Shahs and their program of secularization and modernization.

The book's most original and revealing aspect is its analysis and evaluation of Iran's military since the Islamic Revolution. It treats the war with Iraq in detail and includes a thorough discussion of the main campaigns, battles, and strategic problems. Of special interest is the discussion of the relationship between the *Artesh*—

Iran's professional military—and the *Pasdaran*—the Revolutionary Guards. The role of Shi'a religious zeal and its exploitation by the regime through the formation and sacrifice of the volunteer *Basinji* battalions is also examined. Of particular interest is what the author terms the “undeclared war with the United States” triggered by American support for Saddam Hussein's Iraq and disputes over the free passage of oil tankers and air traffic in the Persian Gulf region. Also discussed is the role of war and conflict in crushing internal dissent and Iran's support for other Shi'a revolutionary movements such as Hezbollah.

The changes wrought by the Islamic revolution of 1979 and the subsequent war against Iraq provide the immediate backdrop to a discussion of Iran's ongoing attempt to emerge as a regional power, independent of the West and of the Arab World, and able to pursue its own policy as a regional power broker. Iran's nuclear ambitions and refusal to bow to international demands seem the logical expression of this strategic objective.

Ward has provided a valuable addition to the literature on Iran's military. An extensive bibliography and citation apparatus support his work. Military officers and national security professionals would do well to read this book—highly recommended.

**LTC Prisco R. Hernández, Ph.D.,
USAR, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas**

MR We Recommend



CUSTER'S BEST: The Story of Company M, 7th Cavalry at the Little Bighorn, French L. MacLean, 2011, Schiffer Publishing, Atglen, PA, 272 pages, \$69.99.

This is the story of George Custer's best cavalry company at the 1876 Battle of the Little Bighorn—Company M. With a tragically flawed, but extremely brave company commander and a no-nonsense first sergeant, Company M maintained a disciplined withdrawal from the skirmish line fighting, saving Major Marcus Reno's entire detachment and possibly the rest of the regiment from annihilation. Presented here is the most-detailed work on a single company at the Little Bighorn ever written—the product of multi-year research at archives across the country and detailed visits to the battlefield by a combat veteran who understands the fields of fire, weapons' effects, training, morale, decision making, unit cohesion, and the value of outstanding noncommissioned officers.

From the publisher.



NOTHING LESS THAN WAR: A New History of America's Entry into World War I, Justus D. Doenecke, University Press of Kentucky, Lexington, 2011, 432 pages, \$40.00.

When war broke out in Europe in 1914, political leaders in the United States were swayed by popular opinion to remain neutral; yet less than three years later, the nation declared war on Germany. Justus D. Doenecke examines the clash of opinions over the war during this transformative period and offers a fresh perspective on America's decision to enter World War I.

Doenecke reappraises the public and private diplomacy of President Woodrow Wilson and his closest advisors and explores in great depth the response of Congress to the war. He also investigates the debates that raged in the popular media and among citizen groups that sprang up across the country as the U.S. economy was threatened by European blockades and as Americans died on ships sunk by German U-boats.

The decision to engage in battle ultimately belonged to Wilson, but as Doenecke demonstrates, Wilson's choice was not made in isolation. *Nothing Less Than War* provides a comprehensive examination of America's internal political climate and its changing international role during the seminal period of 1914-1917.

From the publisher.



BERLIN 1961: Kennedy, Khrushchev, and the Most Dangerous Place on Earth, Frederick Kempe, G.P. Putnam's Sons, New York, 2011, 579 pages, \$29.95.

In June 1961, Nikita Khrushchev called it "the most dangerous place on earth." He knew what he was talking about.

Much has been written about the Cuban Missile Crisis, which occurred a year later, but the Berlin Crisis of 1961 was more decisive in shaping the Cold War—and more perilous. For the first time in history, American and Soviet fighting men and tanks stood arrayed against each other, only yards apart. One mistake, one overzealous commander—and the trip wire would be sprung for a war that would go nuclear in a heartbeat. On one side was a young, untested U.S. president still reeling from the Bay of Pigs disaster. On the other, a Soviet premier hemmed in by the Chinese, the East Germans, and hard-liners in his own government. Neither really understood the other, both tried cynically to manipulate events. And so, week by week, the dangers grew. Based on a wealth of new documents and interviews, filled with fresh—sometimes startling—insights, written with immediacy and drama, *Berlin 1961* is a masterly look at key events of the twentieth century, with powerful applications to these early years of the twenty-first.

From the publisher.



“The B-17”

You can talk of your planes and talk of them long,
Discuss all their points, both the weak and the strong,
You can argue with passion and calmly assess,
Demerits and merits each plane may possess.
Pile figures on fact and statistics relate,
Or a personal preference impressively state,
But when it's all over it's plain to be seen,
There's none that quite touches the B-17.

First of the four-motored bombers she came,
First to the stratosphere, first to the fame,
Of bombing by daylight the enemy skies,
And first to invite the Luftwaffe to rise.
She made the long hauls, whatever the cost,
And many came back, and many were lost.
Formations were lashed by the fighters and flak,
And battles took place that were bloody and black.

But then she rode still triumphantly strong,
To deliver the goods where we know they belong.
So thanks to the escort for helping us through,
And thanks to the '24, gallant and true.
A toast to them all, let every man raise.
And this to the Fortress describing our praise:
She's a symbol of all freedom can mean,
When angered to flight—the B-17.

This poem and the drawing which appears on the facing page are from the journal kept by First Lieutenant Howard Latton of the 381st Bomber Group during his internment in Luft Stalag III (the location of the “Great Escape”) during World War II. After a bombing run over Berlin, an explosion killed seven of the nine fliers aboard his plane and forced him to bail out. Then-2LT Latton evaded capture for three days before being taken prisoner and was held for ten months, until liberated by U.S. troops in April of 1945. Written and drawn by his comrades, these journal entries are just two of the many that depict life in a POW camp, the Army Air Corps’ admiration for their B-17 Flying Fortresses and B-24 Liberators, and the gratitude they had for the fighter escorts. The Honorable Mr. Latton, now 95 and a retired judge for Wisconsin’s 25th Judicial Circuit Court, has graciously donated his journal to the Wisconsin Veterans Museum in Madison.