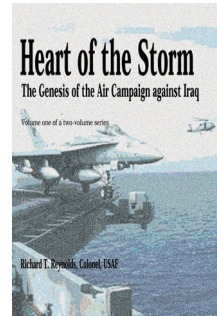


Book Reviews

Heart of the Storm: The Genesis of the Air Campaign Against Iraq



By Richard T Reynolds

Publisher: University Press of the Pacific, 2002 (ISBN: 978-0898758221) 176 pages

Reviewed by Group Captain John Alexander

Biography: Group Captain John Alexander is the Naval and Air Adviser, Islamabad. An RAF Regiment officer, his specialisation in short-range air defence and air-land integration included service in the Falkland Islands in 1982, the Gulf in 1990/91, Iraq in 2003, command of 37 Squadron RAF Regiment, and culminated as Chief Air, Headquarters Allied Rapid Reaction Corps. He has twice been a CAS' Fellow.

Introduction

Reynolds' *Heart of the Storm* is a narrative of the first twenty days of DESERT SHIELD in August 1990 and the struggle to design an air campaign. Air power's flexibility and reach, two of its defining attributes, have led to perennial arguments over whether its use should be strategic or tactical in focus and therefore what targets air power should attack. This argument resurfaced within hours of Saddam Hussein's forces' invasion of Kuwait on 2 August 1990 when an unready US Administration, Pentagon and Central Command struggled to work out how to stop Saddam's forces if they invaded Saudi Arabia, as was feared. The USAF Air University commissioned the research for this short book immediately after the Gulf War to tell the story of this struggle. Its author was a historian and serving colonel who had access to the USAF participants.

This book tells how the CENTCOM commander, General 'Storming Norman' Schwarzkopf, with few forces in Saudi Arabia and no plan, asked the Pentagon Air Staff to plan a 'strategic bombing campaign aimed at Iraq's military' to coerce Iraq into withdrawing if it did move into Saudi Arabia. The Vice Chief of Staff of the Air Force tasked Colonel John Warden, head of the Air Staff's Checkmate planning team, to plan an operation based on Operation EL DORADO CANYON, the US air attack on Libya's leadership in 1996. Warden, a renowned

proponent of strategic air power and author of the *The Air Campaign: Planning for Combat*, planned a campaign based on his five-rings model, to attack leadership, systems essential to the leadership, infrastructure, the population and fielded military forces. But as Reynolds' account contends, there was much disagreement within USAF, and particularly with Warden's concept of independent strategic air operations because it was counter to the doctrine of Air-Land Battle in which air power had a supporting role. Hence, the USAF's Tactical Air Command argued US air power should be used tactically to attack Saddam's fielded forces only. Many, including General Colin Powell, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, and others in the Administration, were also concerned that a strategic air campaign would lead to unlimited war with Iraq, counter to President Bush's desire for a limited war.

The book's strength is its graphic, first-hand account of the initial planning. Readers who have worked in US-led Headquarters since 1990 will recognise the atmospherics of competing generals, the politics, the patronage, the ceaseless battle-rhythm, briefings and slide packs, and will be able to smell the coffee. For readers who have not the book is a great induction. The book culminates with Warden's team briefing the Central Air Force Commander, and commander of CENTCOM Forward, Lt Gen Chuck Horner in Riyadh on 20 August. In the words of John Olsen, Warden and Horner were 'far apart both intellectually and emotionally'. Horner was focused on the Iraqi Army and Warden on Baghdad. Horner was suspicious that Warden represented Pentagon interference. Warden's brief went badly, and, in a remarkable scene, Horner ends up sarcastically playing to his staff, saying he wanted to keep some of Warden's team in Riyadh to help with Horner's plan but not Warden himself. Warden is sent back to the Pentagon.

The book's weakness is that it's a partisan account with little analysis. Indeed the book opens with a note by the commander of Air University expressing his 'deep concern about the way people are characterised by the author', many of whom were still serving when the book was originally published. He criticises the book as reading like a Tom Clancy novel. The book's hero and central character is John Warden. The villains are various senior officers, particular those from Tactical Air Command. The book introduces controversies but without explaining them. These include the air campaign lessons senior USAF officers had internalised from Vietnam, the tensions between the unlimited war of Warden's strategic campaign and a limited war of a tactical, defensive, Air-Land Battle. The book's epilogue mentions that the Desert Storm campaign did include a strategic element but it's unfortunately outside the book's scope to explain how.

The book is a worthwhile read if the reader keeps these flaws in mind because it illustrates the challenges Warden faced. But the reader looking for a fuller and dispassionate analysis of the radically innovative strategic and operational application of air power in 1991, and the complex inter-relationships between the Administration, Pentagon and Central Command, should read John Olsen's *Strategic Air Power in Desert Storm*, also reviewed in this addition. Furthermore *Airpower Reborn: The Strategic Concepts of John Warden and John Boyd*, edited

by Olsen and reviewed by Air Cdre Byford in the 2015 CAS' Reading List, looks beyond the dominant land-centric, battlefield orientated model that Warden was up against, putting the arguments for a strategic air campaign both in historical context and the context of 21st Century conflict.

This article has been republished online with Open Access.

Ministry of Defence © Crown Copyright 2023. The full printed text of this article is licensed under the Open Government Licence v3.0. To view this licence, visit <https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/>. Where we have identified any third-party copyright information or otherwise reserved rights, you will need to obtain permission from the copyright holders concerned. For all other imagery and graphics in this article, or for any other enquires regarding this publication, please contact: Director of Defence Studies (RAF), Cormorant Building (Room 119), Shrivenham, Swindon, Wiltshire SN6 8LA.

 **ROYAL
AIR FORCE**
**Centre for Air and
Space Power Studies**

OGL