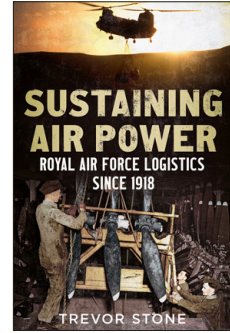


Book Reviews

SUSTAINING AIR POWER: ROYAL AIR FORCE LOGISTICS SINCE 1918



BY TREVOR STONE

PUBLISHER: FONTHILL MEDIA 2017, (ISBN: 978-1-78155-635-1), 496 PAGES

REVIEWED BY WING COMMANDER JAMIE CAMERON

Biography: Wing Commander Jamie Cameron is an RAF Logistics officer. Currently employed as the A4 Force Chief of Staff, he has undertaken a broad range of tours including commanding the Logistics Supply Training Sqn, OC Logistics Wing in Cyprus and acting as the UK Military Senior National Representative in Bosnia Herzegovina. He has a keen interest in air power and history.

INTRODUCTION

Doctor Trevor Stone is a retired RAF Logistics Wing Commander with 35 years' Service experience. He holds a PhD from the University of Exeter and, as the RAF Logistics Branch Honorary Historian and custodian of the RAF Logistics Heritage Collection, is well placed to write the authoritative history of the Branch.

Sustaining Air Power is a comprehensive and well researched treatise of RAF Logistics from 1918. As the first publication to cover the totality of logistics since the formation of the RAF it serves as both a chronological reference and a vivid history. Throughout, the author has struck a fine balance between academic rigour and readability. The author links the evolution of logistics to the evolution of the wider RAF as the organisation adapted to changes in threats, technology, geo-politics and adversaries. Supply, air and ground movements, fuels, evolving home and overseas deployment and operational models, technological development and personnel are all covered in depth. The publication is interspersed with well-considered, sometimes colourful vignettes which aptly illustrate the specific operation or development under consideration. Engendering a wider understanding of logistics in the past, today and going forwards is

key for both logistics practitioners and leaders and this is clearly and effectively detailed by the author. Indeed, in the book's preface Professor Richard Overy states that 'this book will move Royal Air Force (RAF) supply, distribution and maintenance out of the wings to have a place at the stage'.

The book is split into three parts: the first is a chronological overview covering the evolution of RAF logistics since 1918; the second part details specific elements of RAF logistics and the final section covers key conclusions.

In part one of the book, Dr Stone illustrates the challenges faced by logisticians during World War One, the Inter-War years and World War Two and key events are unpicked. Dr Stone describes how the RAF's logistics organisation developed, reaching its peak mass in 1945 and details the sheer scale of expansion in both the Home Base and globally. The significance of dedicated Depots in sustaining air power is examined through statistical analysis and first-hand accounts from across the rank range.

Stone covers the transition from a Cold War, static European focussed organisation to that of Expeditionary Operations in detail clearly demonstrating the inherent adaptability of the overarching C2 structure and flexibility of those tasked with the development and delivery of supporting logistics effect over that 30 year period. Specifically, he identifies the significant impact upon logistics resultant from the 'Options for Change' and 'Frontline First' peace dividend initiatives and closure of most RAF Germany Stations in the 1990s. The post-Cold War Expeditionary era is covered in detail through his summation of operations in the Middle East, Balkans and Afghanistan and most recently Operations LUMINOUS and SHADER in the Levant.

In part 2 of the book the contribution of far-sighted individuals is acknowledged in the analysis of the development of organisations such as Tactical Supply Wing, Expeditionary Logistics Wing and the United Kingdom Mobile Air Movements Squadron. Whilst now part of the fabric of RAF Logistics, the formation of such organisations demonstrated significant forethought. Another fundamental development in RAF logistics was that of IT. Stone argues that the introduction of automated data processing in 1943 and the development of IT in the ensuing years was at the leading edge of its field. Associated dividends included a significant reduction in manpower through automating hitherto manual processes and increasing visibility resulting in improved availability of materiel.

This publication is the story of an evolving organic entity spanning the last century. It highlights both the importance of understanding the history of logistics and the need to focus on the future. Throughout the history of air power logistics, key themes have endured such as a sense of identity; the ability to learn lessons from the past; far-sightedness and adaptability to change; and the importance of being at the forefront of

innovation and technological development. The research and well-constructed analysis means that this is a must-read book for RAF logisticians past and present. More widely, this book is recommended to anyone who would wish to better understand how logistics has created the conditions to allow the RAF to deliver operational effect, globally over the last 100 years.

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