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Flying Tigers: Claire Chennault and His American Volunteers

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One of the primary values of this book is that the views and perspectives shared are not the authors' alone but those of many uniformed and civilian sources, both inside and outside of the Defense Department, as well. For example, two of many fact-filled chapters address working with defense contractors and "the interagency." Both these areas are discussed in a way that allows the reader to gain perspective that might prove helpful when sitting across from a contractor or an employee of the State Department.

This work serves the reader very well, providing knowledgeable insight into the formal and informal processes of this important element of national security and the Department of Defense. The perspective and information contained here is particularly important for the military member or civilian assigned to the Pentagon for the first time.

ALBERT J. SHIMKUS
Naval War College



Ford, Daniel. *Flying Tigers: Claire Chennault and His American Volunteers, 1941–1942*. New York: HarperCollins (Smithsonian Books), 2007. 384pp. \$15.95

In this vivid and fact-filled historical account of aerial combat, Daniel Ford completely updates and revises his 1991 work describing the extraordinary accomplishments of the pilots and support crews of the 1st American Volunteer Group (AVG) in the earliest days of World War II. Ford—a writer for the *Wall Street Journal*, a recreational pilot, and author of *Incident at Muc Wa* (made into the Burt Lancaster

movie *Go Tell the Spartans*)—has used recent American, British, and Japanese sources to both improve and shorten the original book. Famously known as the "Flying Tigers," the AVG was a group of American volunteers recruited by Claire Chennault from the aviation ranks of the U.S. Army, Navy, and Marine Corps to help protect China and key areas of Southeast Asia from unremitting attack by the Japanese army air force. In their Curtiss P-40 Tomahawks, with their iconic shark's teeth motif painted on the noses, the Flying Tigers flew combat missions from three days after Pearl Harbor until July 1942, when the unit was absorbed into the U.S. Army Air Corps. During this seven-month period, the AVG, never numbering at any one time more than about seventy pilots and a roughly equal number of aircraft, inflicted disproportionate damage on the Japanese (1:28 ratio for aircrew losses). This deadly aerial struggle kept the vital 750-mile supply line from India across Burma and into China open and operational for as long as possible during the Japanese onslaught. The men of the AVG did this while living in mostly deplorable conditions, with at best erratic maintenance and logistic support.

The author's depictions of air combat are especially gripping, often describing individual pilots flying for both sides, while providing ample technical information on the types of aircraft in the engagements. Of course the primary characters are all here, from Chennault, a chain-smoking, tough, and innovative leader, to pilots Tex Hill, Eddie Rector, and Greg Boyington (later of VMF-214 "Black Sheep" fame). Ford's history is serious, but it is also rich with stories about this colorful and adventurous

group, including the beautiful and mysterious Olga Greenlaw, wife of the AVG's executive officer.

While correcting some errors and omissions, Ford stands his ground on the most controversial viewpoint expressed in his 1991 edition—that the Flying Tigers' claimed official record of 296 combat victories (including aircraft destroyed on the ground) was greater than what they actually achieved. Citing comprehensive research into the historical records of all involved, Ford makes a good case that because of the predictable stress, fear, and chaos involved in vicious aerial combat, the AVG's reported victories were inflated over a true figure likely closer to 115. Ford's book, then, is not a glorification of the Flying Tigers, but its meticulous examination of their genuine and courageous achievements pays them greater homage than the numbers would, however tallied. Ford closes his book with these words: "More than sixty years ago, in their incandescent youth, they were heroes to a nation that needed heroes. . . . All honor to them." Indeed, and acclaim to Daniel Ford for his thorough telling of an eventful war in the air, one that should be remembered.

WILLIAM CALHOUN
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Raman, B. *The Kaoboy's of R&AW: Down Memory Lane*. New Delhi, India: Lancer, 2007. 288pp. \$27

During the Cold War, views from the "other side" proved endlessly fascinating to students of international affairs. Books such as *The Russians*, by Hedrick Smith, and the multiple memoirs of Viktor Suvorov provided insights into

thought processes and value systems. Most national-security professionals today cannot afford the luxury of focusing on one nation or topic. And as a nation, the United States cannot afford to ignore India.

The Kaoboy's of R&AW is B. Raman's informal (and somewhat unfocused) memoir of his time with India's external intelligence agency, the Research and Analysis Wing (R&AW). "Kaoboy's" refers to the protégés of R. M. Kao, the first director-general of the organization. Raman was a professional intelligence officer who spent much of his career in operational assignments. He spent twenty-six years in R&AW, retiring as head of the agency's counterterrorism unit. He later served in the Indian National Security Secretariat and is currently the director of a think tank in Chennai. Reading between the lines, he likely worked in clandestine intelligence collection, liaison, and paramilitary roles. In some cases (such as discussing security shortfalls in protecting Indira Gandhi) he provides many details; however, in many instances details are noticeable only for their absence.

While the book is valuable, most American readers will find it frustrating. It was written for an Indian audience; the reader without a background in Indian politics since the 1950s will frequently find it obscure. Likewise, those unfamiliar with South Asian geography must occasionally stop reading to check an atlas. The writing style is somewhat folksy but different from the Anglo-American equivalent. Also, it is not strictly chronological. Unfortunately, the memoir is not a representative example of Raman's work; he is a prolific writer on international security issues, his articles are well written and