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Implosion: Downsizing the U.S. Military, 1987–2015

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than provided in Williams's introductory chapter is required for that undertaking.

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Brasher, Bart. *Implosion: Downsizing the U.S. Military, 1987–2015*. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood, 2000. 257pp. \$67

Bart Brasher begins his retrospective discussion of *Implosion* with a simple synopsis in chapter 1, “The Last 1,000 Days of the Cold War.” Mentioned in this chapter is a discussion of the period of the Reagan administration when Defense personnel numbers and budget authority reached their peaks. He includes interesting *USA Today* statistics about defense spending in the United States and in the USSR, as well as a breakdown of how many soldiers, sailors, airmen, and Marines were serving. He also discusses how each service recruits, tests, and promotes its enlisted and officer personnel. Brasher then proceeds to the topic of the security environment (primarily by describing where U.S. military forces are deployed and in what numbers), the demise of the Soviet Union, and various operations that the U.S. military was involved in through the end of the 1980s. He closes this chapter with a discussion of the base realignment process, military readiness at the end of the Cold War, and the size of the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, reserve components, and nuclear forces.

The book's style is readable, and Brasher takes time to explain acronyms, even to describe how civilian control of the military is organized. His explanations about the military and government processes are clear even for the uninitiated.

However, it is clear well before the end of the first chapter that the author's approach consists primarily of stringing together information gleaned from various sources; the first thirty-four-page chapter contains 151 endnotes. Also, the book is replete with numbers and statistics; the average paragraph contains at least two or three. For example, the following is the concluding paragraph of the discussion of Operation JUST CAUSE: “Casualty figures for the invasion included 24 Americans dead, including two who were killed accidentally by their own forces. The number of U.S. wounded was 324, while the PDF suffered 314 killed, 124 wounded, and 5,313 captured. Serious estimates of Panamanian noncombatants killed ran from 100 to 202. Within a few years, Panama was a democracy and Noriega was in a stateside prison, convicted of the narcotics charges brought against him.”

The next several chapters fall into a pattern. For each year from 1990 through 1994, Brasher uses statistical tidbits to discuss human resources, the security environment, the “Base Force” (and other alternate force structures), military readiness, and downsizing. Each chapter sets forth the “security environment,” a chronological account of defense and military issues, primarily illuminated by force-deployment statistics. Subchapters cover in a clear and concise fashion such subjects as contingency operations, the Bottom-Up Review, the base closure process, modernization, and “topsizeing.” Chapter 7 covers the downsizing of the military from 1995 and 1996, and chapter 8 covers the “Quadrennial Defense Review and the Out-Years, 1997 to 2015.” Brasher's conclusions, which occupy two pages, include: “Although many equate the initiation of personnel and force structure

reductions with the end of the Cold War in 1989 or the breakup of the Soviet Union in 1991, DOD, as a whole, started downsizing in 1988. The Army and Air Force started trimming forces in 1987 and the Marine Corps followed suit the following year. The Navy did not start reducing numbers until 1990”; “For the most part, it seems though DOD has managed to keep the cream of the crop in a smaller labor pool. . . . [T]he quality of the Army officer contingent, already high, has been improved by the SSB and VSI initiatives, as most of the commissioned soldiers accepting the bonuses were from the bottom third of their year-groups”; “Some were concerned that African-Americans, as well as other minorities, might bear a disproportionate share of military personnel cuts, but that has not transpired. Along the same line, opportunities for women in the armed forces have not been put on hold because of the downsizing. In fact, their representation has reached record levels”; “Local communities have been hurt by the reduction in the number of DOD installations that started in 1988. However, in many cases, that damages have been significantly less than originally estimated. Thanks to a higher percentage of personnel cuts than base closures, the infrastructure of our fighting establishment is now even more out of sync with force structure than it was in 1987.”

Other conclusions address the need for increased modernization funding, force hollowness (although not on the scale seen in the 1970s), and reductions in personnel and funding (unaccompanied by reductions in global security commitments).

The author (a former Air Force officer of thirteen years’ service) has consulted

hundreds of sources for his book. The bibliography is sixteen pages long. The numbers and statistics are interesting individually, though their sheer volume is overwhelming. The appendices are simple graphs showing a downward trend from 1987 to 1998. What is missing are conclusions and projections (beyond those contained in the Quadrennial Defense Review) about the implications. *Implosion* does a credible job of describing, with key statistics and simple explanations, the magnitude and process of the downsizing of the military (the active components were reduced 35.3 percent between 1987 and 1998), but Brasher seems too enamored of statistical pronouncements, leaving the reader waiting for an answer to the question “What does it all mean?” What will this massive force and budgetary reduction mean for the future of the United States military and its role on the international stage?

If you are looking for a book full of quotable, surprising, and interesting statistics, or for a concise, clearly explained, chronological timeline of how the military was downsized since 1987, this book is for you. However, you will not find pronouncements or predictions about how the reduction in military forces and funding, so carefully detailed and described, will affect the future. Nor does this book pass judgment or offer praise or criticism of how the downsizing occurred. Brasher discusses downsizing much as a good reporter might (just the facts), rather than as a commentator or political analyst. Given the time frame advertized in the title (1987–2015), the author has done only half his job.

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