

2000

Rolling Thunder

J. A. Winnefeld Jr.

Ivan Rendall

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Recommended Citation

Winnefeld, J. A. Jr. and Rendall, Ivan (2000) "Rolling Thunder," *Naval War College Review*: Vol. 53 : No. 2 , Article 18.
Available at: <https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/nwc-review/vol53/iss2/18>

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article, in her own words, places history in the "subjunctive mood," asking whether the painful process of either Russian or Yugoslav disintegration could have been more gradual and civilized.

The work lacks adequate maps (a common complaint). A few are provided in the front matter; they are, however, generic political or topographic maps drawn from standard U.S. sources. Proper maps would have been useful as an aid to understanding the cases. One other drawback, albeit one admitted by the editors, is that this work grew out of a series of workshops that took place between 1994 and 1995. Therefore, the cases examined are somewhat dated.

Although there is no direct analysis of more recent events, the book offers general lessons for the way the Russian government has handled nationalist separatism. Russian policy toward nationalism was in fact rooted in Yeltsin's use of nationalism during his struggle with Mikhail Gorbachev's central government for supremacy in the Soviet Union. Yeltsin's encouragement of the centrifugal forces of nationalism evidently made the job of governing the post-Soviet successor states, including the sometimes bewildering multiethnic patchwork of the Russian Federation, much more difficult. Finding a secure situation for the ethnic Russian population in the newly

independent states, as well as in the ethnic areas of Russia, and formulating reasonable laws governing citizenship and language relations, are the keys to resolving ethnic conflict in the long run. Indeed, where this has not been achieved, chronic conflict has almost always resulted. Finally, the stresses placed on the Russian military deployed in the conflict-prone regions have also contributed to the deterioration of the former superpower's military instrument.

This work will be of lasting value to those who are not specialists in nationalism or regional concerns within the former Soviet Union. I found the book useful while observing the Dagestan crisis, and expect it to be just as useful in the next crisis, and the next.

BARRY ZALAUF
Vienna, Virginia

Rendall, Ivan. *Rolling Thunder*. New York: Free Press, 1997. 336pp. \$26
Many books have been published describing air combat from a variety of different angles, and it is rare for one to add much to the genre. *Rolling Thunder*, by former Royal Air Force pilot Ivan Rendall, does so, by providing a useful and well organized overview of combat in the jet age. Despite a number of distracting errors, the book should be interesting reading for air-combat

junkies and a good history review for young fighter pilots.

Rendall traces the history of jet combat over its first fifty years, emphasizing a theme consistent with any view of warfare, namely that “air combat is about having the best people and machines, then using them ruthlessly to win.” To the extent that a book on modern air combat can cover political-military events without diluting the main subject, Rendall succeeds in tracing how ideological and cultural differences between the East and West affected the development of aircraft and how they fought from World War II through Operation DENY FLIGHT over the former Yugoslavia. His technique—setting the stage for each conflict and then offering interesting (if often rushed) descriptions of aerial combat in each conflict—works well. Rendall also brings other themes into his narrative, such as the extent to which the tactical principles of World War I German pilot Oswald Boelke, known as “Dicta Boelke,” have survived.

Rolling Thunder suffers from a number of flaws, including poor editing and numbers that do not add up. It would have benefited from more scholarly research. Indeed, the author demonstrates a lack of familiarity with the details of weapons technology, which will weaken his credibility with professional readers. In one of many examples, the author

states that unlike rear-quarter infrared missiles, which track a target’s hot tailpipe, all-aspect missiles like the AIM-9L track friction heat from a target’s fuselage. In reality, these missiles tend to track the cooler gases in the target’s engine exhaust plume, which are visible in the forward quarter.

Rendall also offers a far-fetched anecdote or two, such as the story of an F-86 Sabre pilot who supposedly nudged his nosecone up against his wingman’s tailpipe to push him out of hostile territory. Unfortunately, the wingman perished after ejecting over the water, and cannot verify this “extraordinary feat of flying.”

Rendall misses the opportunity to describe how Western fighter tactics were forced to evolve when the Eastern bloc achieved a true radar look-down capability some years after the Vietnam War. Another missing theme is the gradual divergence between U.S. Air Force and U.S. Navy doctrine, the tactics arising from each service’s Cold War operating environment, and how they were forced back together during the Gulf War. Curiously, the author does not discuss how sixty coalition aircraft were lost in DESERT STORM to ground fire, which would have complemented his discussion of such losses in other conflicts. Finally—oddly in a book that describes nearly every event in which jet aircraft have

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flown in combat—Rendall does not address the Iran-Iraq War, the U.S. Navy's experience in Lebanon (a watershed event for the service), or the U.S. Air Force and Navy joint strikes into Libya.

Rendall does touch on several important issues and trends in modern air combat, including the critical importance of weapons schools; comparisons of gun and missile kills in various conflicts; how older aircraft, such as the F-4 and F-14, often migrate to air-to-ground roles; the importance of rules of engagement, stealth, and electronic warfare; and how aviators have been required to cope with increasingly complex aircraft systems.

Despite *Rolling Thunder's* shortcomings, its overall message is sound. Rendall concludes with a brief soliloquy on where the jet age is headed, with reference to the debate over whether manned aircraft are destined for extinction in favor of unmanned aerial vehicles. He leaves the reader with the thought that though the "edge of the envelope" is now set by cost and human limitations, humans will remain a key ingredient in air combat success for the foreseeable future. Although it is a bit airpower-centric, *Rolling Thunder* is an outstanding primer for those who want a solid overview of how modern air combat evolved, and a good springboard

for examining the subject in greater detail.

J. A. WINNEFELD, JR.
Captain, U.S. Navy

Nelson, Curtis L. *Hunters in the Shallows: A History of the PT Boat*. Washington, D.C.: Brassey's, 1998. 242pp. \$28.95

Polmar, Norman, and Samuel Loring Morison. *PT Boats at War: World War II to Vietnam*. Osceola, Wis.: MBI Publishing, 1999. 160pp. \$19.95

Hoagland, Edgar D. *The Sea Hawks with the PT Boats at War: A Memoir*. Novato, Calif.: Presidio Press, 1999. 234pp. \$24.95

For many readers, PT boats stir up images that are based on a pair of black-and-white movies and a corny television series, in which the PT crews are portrayed as non-conformist, courageous, and usually successful in near-suicidal torpedo attacks on swift and deadly enemy cruisers and destroyers. While these stories are entertaining, the reality of PT operations and the true effectiveness of the dreaded "mosquito boats" can be found in the three books discussed in this review.

The two books by Curtis Nelson, Norman Polmar, and Samuel Morison are excellent overviews. They give detailed descriptions of the programmatic background and