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Missile Inbound: The Attack on the Stark in the Persian Gulf

Lillian A. Burke

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show signs of evolving. Since 1967 things could have been much worse, but they can be made better." It is for this reason, Sharkansky suggests, while conceding that Israel has special problems, that the manner in which it seeks to cope with them is "useful for understanding other places as well. The treatment of each problem examined in this book has parallels elsewhere."

LESLIE C. GREEN
Charles H. Stockton Professor
of International Law
Naval War College

Levison, Jeffrey L., and Randy L. Edwards. *Missile Inbound: The Attack on the Stark in the Persian Gulf*. Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 1997. 160pp. \$28.95

In 1987, while patrolling the Persian Gulf in international waters, USS *Stark* (FFG 31) was attacked by an Iraqi F-1 aircraft with two Exocet missiles. Although *Stark* had correctly identified and tracked the aircraft, the ship did not fire a shot in self-defense, and it was struck by both missiles. *Missile Inbound* comprehensively documents the attack, the damage control effort, and the subsequent investigation. The story is both an inspiring tale of heroism and a stern warning of how well-intentioned people can fail with disastrous consequences.

Damage control, though not the main focus of the book, deserves special mention. The second chapter contains an exciting account; it reads like a Tom Clancy novel but has the advantage of being true. Although the inevitable

use of Navy terminology may make it difficult for some readers, anyone who has ever participated in a shipboard fire drill will enjoy this section. Useful diagrams are included that illustrate the challenge faced by the crew of the *Stark*.

However, the book does contain some flaws. The heart of *Missile Inbound* is devoted to the investigation of the attack. Most of the information presented is taken directly from testimony given during the investigation and is thoroughly documented. However, the choice of quotes seems to display a bias in favor of the executive officer and tactical action officer (TAO) and against the commanding officer. For example, Levison and Edwards severely criticize the commanding officer of the *Stark*, Commander G. R. Brindel, for not having accepted full responsibility for the incident at the investigation—possibly shielding subordinate officers from punishment. They speculate that Commander Brindel did this on the advice of counsel, but they seem not to have attempted to ask either person if that was actually the case. In contrast, the TAO's attorney is quoted extensively. Randy Edwards himself represented the executive officer. The absence of input from either Commander Brindel or his counsel makes the discussion unbalanced.

The chapters on the investigation also fail to clarify two important points. First, the *Stark* apparently never detected the incoming missiles on radar, but the text is unclear as to whether or not it should have expected to detect them. Secondly, there is extensive discussion about at what point *Stark* should have issued UHF radio warnings to the Iraqi aircraft, whereas in the

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last chapter the authors state that the aircraft did not even have a UHF radio. If this is the case, then the question should have been why U.S. forces did not know that planes flown by our "allies" did not have UHF capability.

Both authors are attorneys, and the chapters describing the investigation and legal proceedings benefit greatly from their expertise. Edwards has over twenty years of military experience in the active and reserve Marine Corps, as is clearly evident in his ability to place events in their proper context. All legal terms are clearly explained so that a layman may follow the proceedings without difficulty. Levison and Edwards also spell out every Navy acronym. Unfortunately, in many cases the words behind the acronyms are not enough to convey to someone without recent Navy experience what the term means. A glossary would have made the book accessible to a wider range of readers.

Missile Inbound presents its story in a manner sympathetic to the officers of the *Stark* while maintaining overall loyalty to the concept of accountability. The authors question whether any other ship would have done better in the same circumstances. The *Stark* incident challenges anyone interested in national security: how well will units untested in actual combat perform in the first minutes of battle? How do we know when training has been sufficient? In peacetime, how does one choose officers who will be effective in combat? While *Missile Inbound* does not answer these questions, it provides interesting material for the debate.

LILLIAN A. BURKE
Lieutenant, U.S. Navy

(We note with sadness Lieutenant
Burke's passing on 2 May 1998.)

Hynes, Samuel. *The Soldiers' Tale: Bearing Witness to Modern War*. New York: Penguin, 1997. 318pp. \$24.95

Based on a series of lectures given by Samuel Hynes at the University of Toronto in 1994, this book is an extended rumination on twentieth-century war memoirs. The author's stated purpose is to understand what war is actually like by studying the stories of veterans about their wartime experiences. He contends that because wars exact such great costs from society, it has been deemed necessary to surround them with "myths." These myths are not untruths, he writes, but rather simplified narratives that have evolved from war to give it meaning. There are "bad," "good," and "necessary" wars; nonetheless, and however politically necessary they may be in justifying war's terrible costs, these myths obscure its grim realities—realities found only in personal narratives. Hynes believes that by setting these personal narratives against the myths of war we can learn the whole story, not just what is politically acceptable.

However, in his search to discover what war is really like (not just the "war in the head" we imagine), the author faced considerable obstacles. For one, he concedes that war narratives are ultimately contradictory. Indeed, some say that war is an unmitigated disaster, others that it is an experience not to be missed. Another problem is that most veterans are emphatic that the experience cannot be communicated—if you