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Savage Peace: Americans at War in the 1990's

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Bolger, Daniel P. *Savage Peace: Americans at War in the 1990s*. Novato, Calif.: Presidio, 1995. 420pp. \$24.95

With the ascendance of the United Nations in the aftermath of the Cold War, Daniel P. Bolger's *Savage Peace* is a timely work, addressing the evolution of contemporary peacekeeping and security operations. According to Bolger, war is hell, but so is winning the peace. His treatment of operations other than war (OOTW) is an informative account of American involvement in a risky and perpetually ill-defined area of armed intervention. A serving Army infantry officer, Bolger writes from an insider's viewpoint about the military's attempt to grapple with this amorphous phenomenon. He measures the personal costs in resources—time, money, and lives. Essentially, it is a soldier's story.

The best parts of Bolger's work are his case studies. The human tragedy of Beirut is particularly poignant. The Marine presence under siege, through sniper fire, artillery volleys, and ultimately a terrorist bombing that would result in the largest Marine fatality rate for a single day in the Corps' history, shocks the conscience. Similarly, the confinement of the Army's Multinational Force and observers to the unrelenting monotony of the Sinai, where the heat, horizon, and hours stretch for eternity, is a glaring reality. The mean streets of Somalia and the urban grit of Sarajevo are other graphic illustrations. Bolger neatly spins a tale that is compelling, human, and matter-of-fact.

Paradoxically, the worst parts of the tale are in the narrative. The author's style makes the ugly American stand tall.

There is a persistent John Wayne quality that makes the United States come across as "the great white hope." American deaths, for example, are always a tragedy; anyone else's is only a statistic. Perhaps trying to be clever, Bolger indulges extreme expressions about the Third World that struck this reviewer as crass and callous. Additionally, the chronology of events reads like a Mickey Spillane novel, lurid and melodramatic. Allusions to American cultural symbols like Jimi Hendrix, Mad Max, 911, and *Magnum, P.I.* are liberally sprinkled throughout. The litany of hazards, kinds of killing, name dropping, and gory details sometimes reminds one of voyeurism at a car crash. The text is regularly too familiar, self-indulgent, and remarkably chauvinistic.

Savage Peace, however, is effective at providing an environment for understanding America's role in OOTW. The nature of operations, decision making, and execution is intelligently represented. The beginning chapters are especially pertinent in laying the groundwork for perceiving how policy is translated into practice in the subsequent case studies. Maps and diagrams are helpful in complex explanations. The appendices are of assistance as to operations and military command structures.

Lieutenant Colonel Bolger gives a pro-American and pro-military account. Written journalistically, his chapters are interesting, uncomplicated, and fluid. *Savage Peace* is a front-row view of the American engagement and enlargement policy through the mirrored sunglasses of the warrior. An excellent resource for readers unfamiliar

with the dynamics of the military, it is a study of modern peacekeeping operations. In the end, Bolger succeeds in showing that “demilitarized” zones usually are not, and that “peacekeeping” operations are anything but. What he does not provide, however, is the scholarly analysis that his Ph.D. in history might have led readers to expect.

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Peebles, Curtis. *Dark Eagles: A History of Top Secret U.S. Aircraft Programs*. Novato, Calif.: Presidio, 1995. 344pp. \$17.95

Through extensive research from a variety of sources, Curtis Peebles gives the reader a fascinating and informative look into the top secret world of “black aircraft.” He chronicles a dozen or so projects that produced such exotic planes as the SR-71 and the F-117, which were developed and first flown largely without public knowledge. The reason for all the secrecy was, of course, to keep foreign countries from knowing the extent of U.S. technological developments.

The beginning of the “black” projects came in September 1941, with the decision to build the first operational jet fighter, the XP59A, using the British Whittle engine. Wartime security demands by the British and American governments wrapped the project in the kind of secrecy and deception that was to be a model for later such projects. The Bell P-59 Airacomet was not successful as a fighter, but the Lockheed

P-80 was. The Shooting Star’s secret birthplace was the “Skunk Works,” the experimental design facility created by Clarence “Kelly” Johnson, Lockheed’s legendary chief designer. The Skunk Works, together with the secret test facility at Groom Lake, Nevada (nicknamed “the Ranch,” and also known as “Area 51”), produced a number of black aircraft that caught the public’s fancy once they were revealed, such as the U-2, SR-71, and F-117. Not all aircraft have made it to the production stage; those that did not are, therefore, less well known. Several of these, such as the D-21 Tagboard, were high-altitude unmanned reconnaissance drones. One of the more interesting current developmental efforts is to develop an “eternal” drone aircraft that will be able to stay aloft for months at a time using auxiliary solar power. Peebles predicts that such an aircraft, the Helios-SRA (Solar Rechargeable Aircraft), could become operational by 1998.

Curtis Peebles, a writer best known as an avid UFO debunker and the author of *Watch the Skies! A Chronicle of the Flying Saucer Myth*, devotes most of *Dark Eagles* to the development of these and other projects, as well as to their operational history. The promotional material on the back cover claims, “Peebles dug out the facts through FOIA [Freedom of Information Act] requests, complemented with interviews of the people who designed and flew these revolutionary aircraft.” However, the forty pages of endnotes reveal that very little information really came from these sources; the vast majority was taken from more authoritative authors whose books and articles