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Bombing to Win: Air Power and Coercion in War

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warfare problem is an interesting perspective but is probably overdrawn. The reluctance to refer to parallel analytic studies of Gulf war command and control issues (journalistic accounts are cited) will appear as a shortcoming for serious scholars of the war. For example, I was unable to find any reference to Alan Campen's excellent *The First Information War* (AFCEA Press, 1992) in the text or in any of the copious and detailed endnotes.

But these shortcomings must be viewed in the context of the major contribution the work provides. This book should be on the shelf of any current or aspiring JFACC. It tells us what must be fixed and what must be avoided when we next enter combat, particularly if we face an enemy more capable than Saddam Hussein.

JAMES A. WINNEFELD
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Pape, Robert A. *Bombing to Win: Air Power and Coercion in War*. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell Univ. Press, 1996. 336pp. \$19.95

Professor Robert Pape's systematic critique of the effectiveness of strategic bombing as a decisive instrument of war will not be welcomed by air power enthusiasts, especially while the National Defense Panel prepares its recommendations on the shape, structure, and resourcing of the Department of Defense for the twenty-first century. Pape, one of the founding faculty members at the Air Force's premier School for Advanced Airpower Studies and now an assistant professor of government at

Dartmouth, logically analyzes the dynamics of modern military coercion by means of air power to demonstrate the historical irrelevance of strategic bombing as a way of achieving decisive effects in war. Studying cases ranging from the Spanish Civil War through Operation DESERT STORM, Pape concludes that "strategic bombing does not work. Strategic bombing for punishment and decapitation does not coerce, and strategic bombing is rarely the best way to achieve denial." Furthermore, contrary to the flamboyant—and ahistorical—claims of retired Air Force Colonel John Warden and other devotees of General Giulio Douhet (an advocate of the establishment of independent air units, strategic bombing, and the author of *Il dominio dell'aria*, 1921), the advent of precision-guided munitions is not likely to enhance the coercive effects of strategic bombing.

Touching on numerous attempts to use strategic air attack over the last half-century, Pape provides a detailed analysis of strategic bombing in World War II, Korea, Vietnam, and DESERT STORM. Contrary to the "historical" case built for the role of strategic bombing by air power enthusiasts, Pape concludes that strategic bombing has been generally ineffective and occasionally counterproductive. The one possible exception is LINEBACKER I, the air campaign devised to counter North Vietnam's invasion of South Vietnam in the spring of 1972. LINEBACKER I, however, was an interdiction campaign, albeit one with a strategic effect. It worked because the strategic objectives of the United States had changed from winning the war to withdrawing as

gracefully as possible, and because the South Vietnamese army fought very hard. Air power was pivotal but not decisive.

Pape concludes that strategic bombing is perceived as an alternative to the bloody realities of war because political leaders are ever in search of cheap solutions to complex international problems. Now dubbed the "strategic air campaign" by the neo-Douhetans, the notion that striking "critical nodes" in electrical, communications, and transportation systems can bring quick, easy, and painless victory is still appealing. Unfortunately, while history does not bear out this argument, most political leaders and too many military leaders are not savvy enough to counter these historically corrupt and false promises.

Pape might have bolstered his case by giving the U.S. Air Force more credit for doing what it was designed and structured to do in the post-Korean War era: to deter the Soviet Union by the threat of massive nuclear retaliation. The Strategic Air Command, which by 1959 counted 1,854 bombers in its inventory, succeeded in its primary mission of deterrence by being prepared to obliterate the Soviet Union, China, and the Warsaw Pact nations, should that have been necessary. But since the world of 1997 is very different from that of 1959 or even 1989, this ought not be of much comfort to die-hard air power enthusiasts. The United States Air Force could, in fact, be quite vulnerable—its reason for being is not so apparent today as it once was.

Bombing to Win is a critically important book. If we are fortunate, Warden and his followers will mount a "counter-Pape" campaign in various

professional journals, and our corporate knowledge will grow by the ensuing debate. In any event, every member of the National Defense Panel should be sent a copy of *Bombing to Win*.

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Zakheim, Dov S. *Flight of the Lavi: Inside a U.S.-Israeli Crisis*. New York: Brassey's, 1996. 277pp. \$25.95

"How can a nice Jewish boy oppose the State of Israel?"

Dov Zakheim, an Orthodox Jew and a former United States Deputy Under-Secretary of Defense, has written a gripping account of his role in the cancellation of Israel's Lavi fighter program. It was a role that would test his analytical abilities, his patience, and his courage, and it would bring great pressure to bear on members of his family, not all of whom agreed with his effort to end the Lavi program.

Designing and developing a new tactical airplane, particularly a new fighter, is a very exciting and emotional undertaking even for the larger, established aircraft manufacturing companies. But when the designer, developer, and prospective builder is Israel Aircraft Industries (IAI), which views the project as a first-rate tactical aircraft that is necessary to increase the warfighting capabilities of the Israeli Air Force and as a vehicle to expand Israel's technology base and provide jobs for Israeli workers, as well as strengthen Israel's foreign military sales (all at the expense of the United