

1995

## Crosswinds: The Air Force's Setup in Vietnam

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### Recommended Citation

Holley, I.B. Jr. (1995) "Crosswinds: The Air Force's Setup in Vietnam," *Naval War College Review*: Vol. 48 : No. 1 , Article 22.  
Available at: <https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/nwc-review/vol48/iss1/22>

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counterterrorism. Then in chapter five, Sturgill takes a sharp turn into recent U.S. peacekeeping operations, which is followed by another sharp turn in chapter six, about psychological operations.

By that time, any reader who has stayed the course will be looking for any sign of a road map showing where the author is headed; all signs point clearly to his classroom. Most chapters end with a professional question or two to stimulate student discussion along the lines of "Whom do we blame?" and "Whose fault is it?" Do not forget to consult the checklist for extra credit.

Among the many issues of concern one could have with this work, I will offer four. First, there is little evidence of a theoretical or philosophical framework. Where are Sturgill's references to, or even bibliographic acknowledgment of, Arendt, Brinton, Edwards, Davies, Gurr, Jenkins, the Bells, Hagopian—even Aristotle? The best we get is a two-paragraph rudimentary treatment of "Marxist-Maoist" theory, in his conclusion to the second chapter.

Second, despite Sturgill's close ties to the U.S. military, to the Air University in particular, there is no evidence that he is aware of the 1959–1961 inter-service bickering over which service would have primacy for the evolving doctrine of counterinsurgency. "Global Termite Control" (not on his fifty-item list) the Marines called it in the *Marine Corps Gazette* in January 1961—and we are the best termite controllers extant. Nor, despite his close ties to special operations, does he mention or consider the old Special Operations Research Office. Also, for the author to talk about

Latin America without mentioning Project Camelot is inexcusable.

Third, how can one speak of low-intensity conflict in American history without mentioning Samuel Adams, and without reference to Samuel Eliot Morison's treatment in his *Oxford History of the American People* of Adams's role prior to the Revolutionary War? The closest the author gets is a brief reference to Rogers's Rangers and the French and Indian War.

Last, and most important, Sturgill has learned none of the lessons of revolutionary and counterrevolutionary war (let us dismiss his fifty-item list for the sake of clarity). He betrays himself at the very end of the book with the damning sentence, in reference to low-intensity conflicts, "Our other prayer should be, of course, that we *win* [Sturgill's emphasis] them all."

In sum, this is not an authoritative work, and it has little redeeming value beyond its intended purpose as a classroom syllabus. It makes in fact a negative contribution to national security and to our understanding of the chaotic forces unleashed by the fall of the Soviet Union, and there is no insight as to how we should respond to events in Bosnia, Yemen, Rwanda, or Haiti.

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Tilford, Earl H., Jr. *Crosswinds: The Air Force's Setup in Vietnam*. College Station: Texas A&M Univ. Press, 1993. 252pp. \$30 (originally published in 1991 as *Setup: What the Air Force Did*

*in Vietnam and Why*, reviewed in the Winter 1993 issue of this journal, pp. 135–6).

The central thesis of this book is that the failure of air power in Vietnam cannot be charged entirely to the politicians or the press. As Tilford sees it, it was the senior Air Force leaders who were largely to blame.

The introduction by Caroline Ziemke, a historian with the Institute for Defense Analysis, highlights Tilford's effort to use history as a learning exercise, in contrast to the official uniformed historians, who, she says, "too often lack the critical analysis necessary to challenge unhealthy myth." While one can only applaud her assertion that "it is more important to understand what went wrong" than it is "to manipulate the record and paint failure as victory," she might better have asked how often the critical passages of official historians have been suppressed by those higher in the chain of command.

Earl Tilford is a retired Air Force major who is currently a historian at the Army War College. He has a well earned reputation as one who speaks the truth as he perceives it, no matter what the personal cost. Unfortunately, in this work, he sometimes weakens the thrust of his argument with too-sweeping assertions.

For example, although the author is undoubtedly right when he says that air power, "while occasionally pivotal, was never decisive" in Vietnam, he also alludes to "the dubious doctrine of strategic bombing." Does he mean that strategic bombing is dubious in every context or only when misapplied against a nonindustrial nation? He also

states that half a century has passed since air power was used effectively to win a war; he seems to ignore the highly successful strategic bombing during the Gulf war.

These strictures aside, Tilford homes in on what he regards as the false turns that led the Air Force leadership to act as it did in Vietnam. One important one he identifies is the decline in critical analysis and provocative writing in the *Air University Quarterly Review* that became evident after Defense Secretary Louis Johnson mandated that all articles be screened for "policy and propriety" as well as security; that decision led to intellectual flabbiness in the Air Force and an apparent willingness to fudge official reporting. As evidence of this, Tilford cites the coverup in the early 1960s of the fact that U.S. pilots were actually flying offensive missions, not just training Vietnamese pilots. Whenever a U.S. pilot shot down an enemy plane, credit for the kill would go to "any suitable South Vietnamese pilot" who happened to be in the area.

Widely using end-of-tour reports, unit histories and official studies as well as secondary sources, the author argues convincingly that the United States Air Force's planning, and also its faith in strategic bombing, were seriously flawed in Vietnam. When President Kennedy appointed bomber general Curtis LeMay as Air Force Chief of Staff, the subsequent bombing strategy in Vietnam was virtually foreordained. The strategic persuasion anticipated by LeMay, however, was negated by President Johnson's political constraints, which resulted from his fear of Chinese

intervention; so the bombing campaign switched to a tactical or interdiction role for which it was ill suited. One phase of Operation Rolling Thunder caused an estimated \$600 million in damage to North Vietnam; the Air Force incurred a \$6 billion replacement cost, with the loss of 990 aircraft and five hundred airmen. While this reviewer is willing to agree that the interdiction bombing campaign was badly handled and, in the final analysis, a misapplication of air power, Tilford's repeated downplaying of the importance of political restraints seems inappropriate. He himself admits that the relatively unrestrained 1972 bombing of the north, designated Linebacker, did bring the enemy to the negotiating table.

Despite the author's indictment of Air Force thinking and its general failure in strategic bombing, he does offer fascinating details, such as the inversion in the ratio of support to bomber aircraft as the conflict developed; the need for improved fighter training, met by Red Flag (the Air Force program to train fighter pilots in the realities of combat); and the need (which still exists) for better distribution of intelligence.

Tilford's summation in the final chapter is worth the price of the book. In it there is one sentence that captures the essence of this work: "In Vietnam the Air Force, like the other services, was rarely outfought, but like the other services it was often *outthought*."

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Dwyer, John B. *Seaborne Deception: The History of U.S. Navy Beach Jumpers*. New York: Praeger, 1992. 151pp. \$42.95

Sun Tzu, the great Chinese military philosopher, held that "to be certain to take what you attack is to attack a place the enemy does not protect." The use of deception is as old as warfare and a tactic useful to both attacker and defender. *Seaborne Deception* focuses primarily on the World War II exploits of a group of naval specialists, dubbed Beach Jumpers, who conducted sea-based deception and diversion operations in support of amphibious landings—first against the Axis forces in North Africa and the Mediterranean Theatre of Operations and subsequently against the Japanese as the U.S. island-hopping campaign in the Pacific gathered momentum.

John B. Dwyer is a professional military writer specializing in naval history, although the credits make no mention of any service experience or academic qualifications. In his preface he creates the expectation of an exciting narrative linking the Beach Jumpers of the 1940s to today's stealth practices. However, the ensuing account does not live up to the promise of the preface, which is the best-written part of the book. Dwyer begins by invoking the persona of actor-cum-naval officer Douglas Fairbanks, Jr., whom he largely credits for the founding and success of the Beach Jumpers. Yet we get no larger-than-life portrayal, as the redoubtable Fairbanks fades away by book's end, though he had earned the Legion of Merit in Operation BIGOT-ANVIL (a diversion designed to tie down German forces in