

1980

Anti-personnel Weapons

W.Hays Parks

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/nwc-review>

Recommended Citation

Parks, W.Hays (1980) "Anti-personnel Weapons," *Naval War College Review*: Vol. 33 : No. 3 , Article 23.
Available at: <https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/nwc-review/vol33/iss3/23>

This Book Review is brought to you for free and open access by the Journals at U.S. Naval War College Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Naval War College Review by an authorized editor of U.S. Naval War College Digital Commons. For more information, please contact repository.inquiries@usnwc.edu.

126 NAVAL WAR COLLEGE REVIEW

argument against secrecy in arms control negotiations is without doubt the most provocative chapter in the book. He denigrates the tactical value of secrecy in negotiations with the Soviets, and argues strongly for congressional involvement in all stages of arms control negotiations. The reputation of Capitol Hill as a sieve for classified material is not confronted as directly, by Weiler, as many would believe appropriate. And one suspects that his argument for a broadened congressional role reflects the hidden assumption that such involvement will temper the Military Establishment; whether he holds the same view today, in light of the anti-SALT sentiment in the halls of Congress, and the increasing importance being ascribed to national defense, is at least an interesting question.

To conclude, *Congress and Arms Control* is a readable, interesting book that may be of value to the informed layman, as well as the specialist. However, the reader is not presented with the full story, the book's lack of balance necessitates an antidote on the other side of this most important topic.

AUGUSTUS RICHARD NORTON
Major, U.S. Army

Stockholm International Peace Research Institute. *Anti-personnel Weapons*. New York: Crane-Russak, 1978. 299pp.

Aside from its annual yearbook, *Anti-personnel Weapons* is the latest product of the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), an "independent" institute financed by the Swedish Parliament. This particular volume was prepared especially for the ongoing United Nations Conventional Weapons Conference, scheduled to hold its second formal session in Geneva in September 1980. Sweden, the principal proponent of that conference, freely distributed copies of *Anti-personnel Weapons* at the first session of the conference in September 1979.

A review of events of the preceding decade is necessary to an understanding of *Anti-personnel Weapons*. Sweden, a critic of United States participation in the conflict in Vietnam and of weapons being employed by the United States, pressed for an international conference to ban antipersonnel weapons which (it concluded) caused "unnecessary suffering." After various meetings of government experts from 1972-1977, Sweden was successful in obtaining United Nations sponsorship of the present conference. The myriad precedent conferences and events occurring in the interim have served to narrow the issues and tone down the highly politicized rhetoric of the Vietnam war era. For example, Sweden's condemnation of the U.S. M-18 claymore mine as an illegal weapon ceased abruptly in the mid-1970s when its army began development and testing of its version of the claymore, the FFV 013 (which it subsequently adopted). Likewise, Sweden now concedes that none of the weapons under consideration by the U.N. Conference is illegal *per se*. However, this has not deterred Sweden in its efforts to achieve restrictions on the use of certain antipersonnel weapons against exposed combatants, thereby possibly explaining SIPRI's rationale for publication of *Anti-personnel Weapons*. Confronted by the substantial armor forces of the Soviet Union, and predominantly an infantry-oriented nation, Sweden has sought unsuccessfully to impose legal restraints on weapons that may be employed against exposed personnel (i.e., infantry forces), while proposing no limits on the attack of armored, or mechanized, forces. (Students of history will recall a similar unsuccessful effort to use international law to overcome a tactical disadvantage in the various endeavors of Great Britain in the post-World War I era to ban the submarine as a weapon of war or, in the Rules of Submarine Warfare of the Treaty of

PROFESSIONAL READING 127

London of 22 April 1930, to require submarines to conform to the rules of international law to which surface vessels are subject.)

A detailed critique of *Anti-personnel Weapons* would require as many, if not more, pages than the volume itself. Its conclusions are given a false aura of credibility by the subjective selection, truncation and juxtaposition of quotations and data. It is rife with inaccuracies and errors of law. It uses a form of writing and presentation that gives a pretense of authority when in fact there is none. A few examples will serve to illustrate this.

In laying a foundation for a case against flechettes, the book characterizes the bomb-shaped darts (substantially larger than flechettes) dropped from aircraft during World War I as flechettes that could "pierce a man from head to foot," a statement as historically inaccurate as it is physically impossible. In asserting its position against small-caliber, high-velocity projectiles, discussed below, it is suggested that international law allows only bullets that are solid and fired at low velocity. While the third declaration of the 1899 Hague Peace Conference prohibited the employment of so-called "dumdum," or expanding, bullets, the only restrictions on bullet velocity have been those unsuccessfully put forward by Sweden during the 1970s. Indeed, efforts by Sweden to tie superfluous injury to velocity have been rejected as medically and scientifically unsound by an international committee of experts at the Conventional Weapons Conference. In its condemnation of modern lightweight fragmentation weapons, the book errs in confusing weapons aimed directly at the individual soldier (e.g., bullets) and area weapons (e.g., the M79 40mm high-explosive grenade, and similar fragmentation devices) in implying that the latter violate the St. Petersburg Declaration of 1868 prohibiting projectiles of a weight

below 400 grams. The history of the conference at St. Petersburg is quite clear in establishing that the limitation was intended to cover only the former.

In fact, the book is rather promiscuous in its use of the term "illegal." In discussing the stalemate of trench warfare in World War I, the book declares that "to break this deadlock, armies used illegal means of warfare, including gas and armed aircraft...." Aircraft never have been considered to be an illegal means of warfare, nor does the attack of combatants with a lawful weapon constitute a violation of the law of war. Agreement on restrictions on first use of poisonous gas was reached in the 1925 Geneva Gas Protocol not so much because gas was illegal, but because it was not considered militarily effective. Similarly, *Anti-personnel Weapons* refers to damage from harassment and interdiction fire as causing "damage to the environment [that] is long-term, widespread and severe." The quoted language, which does not appear within quotation marks in the book, is excerpted from Articles 35(3) and 55 of the 1977 Protocol I to the 1949 Geneva Conventions, which prohibit such damage. However, in reaching consensus on those provisions at the Diplomatic Conference on the Reaffirmation and Development of International Humanitarian Law Applicable in Armed Conflicts, the participating parties (including Sweden) were clear in their understanding that battlefield damage incidental to conventional warfare is not proscribed by this provision.

Other misstatements manifest the book's lack of objectivity. Helicopter gunships are referred to as "intended mainly for counterinsurgency operations," apparently in an attempt to gain Third World support. Similarly, one finds a great deal of criticism of modern weapons, but no mention of punji pits and other primitive but equally injurious means of warfare. The book's

128 NAVAL WAR COLLEGE REVIEW

not-so-subtle progression from the early use of aircraft by the RAF in Iraq to alleged "indiscriminate area bombing" in World War II, Korea, and Vietnam not only errs in fact and in confusing weapons as such with techniques of weapons employment, but leaves the reader with the conclusion that all bombs dropped from aircraft are dropped indiscriminately over areas.

Perhaps the book's greatest deficiency lies in its discussion of weapons by nationality. U.S. weapons repeatedly are referred to as existing systems, whereas many were either obsolete or discarded as unworkable in the experimental stage, long before the book's publication. For example, reference is made to the development of the XM256E1 (7.62mm) cartridge by the U.S. Army's Frankford Arsenal. The XM256E1 program was terminated and Frankford Arsenal closed more than a year prior to the book's publication. Moreover, discussion focuses on U.S. weapons to the neglect of those of other states; including the Soviet Union. After providing a seven-page list of U.S. cluster bombs, for example, a "comprehensive range" of like Soviet weapons is dismissed with a one-sentence reference even though it is apparent from that reference that sufficient material was available to the author for his elaboration had he elected to do so. There is substantial discussion and condemnation of U.S. fuel-air explosives, but no mention of unsuccessful efforts by the Swedish Government during the period in which this book was written to obtain FAE munitions from the United States for its own research and development. In declaring illegal modern small-caliber, high-velocity rifles, considerable information is provided regarding the U.S. M-16 (5.56mm) rifle, to the neglect of the Swedish FFV 660 (5.56mm) that Sweden had been evaluating for its own army for some time prior to publication

of *Anti-personnel Weapons*. (Since the publication of *Anti-personnel Weapons*, Sweden has adopted the FFV 660 and the Soviet Union has deployed the AK-74 (5.41mm). Both the FFV 660 and the AK-74 have muzzle velocities equal to or higher than the M-16.)

The misrepresentations regarding small-caliber, high-velocity rifles are manifestation of an apparent lack of objectivity and elementary research contained in *Anti-personnel Weapons*. The book uses "stopping power" as a measurement of superfluous injury or unnecessary suffering, despite the fact that no developer uses immediate incapacitation as an effectiveness criteria for military small arms. Great stock is placed in the premises that the M193 (5.56mm) ammunition for the M-16 rifle tumbles early and breaks up on impact, thereby causing unnecessary suffering. In meetings of government ballistics and medical experts at a preparatory session of the U.N. Conventional Weapons Conference, as well as at similar meetings at the September 1979 Conference, it was concluded that the question of whether a bullet that tumbles early (compared with one that tumbles later) and causes a greater or more severe wound, much less superfluous injury, is highly problematical. Moreover, contrary to the near 100mm variance in tumbling alleged by the author between the M193 and the Soviet 7.62mm round used in the ubiquitous AK-47, actual tests established that the M193, 7.62mm (U.S.S.R.), and 7.62mm (NATO) all tumble on the average of 15mm of one another, a small difference. To the extent that it occurs at all, bullet breakup was found to be a characteristic of all military ammunition, including the Soviet 7.62mm, rather than being unique to the M193. Curiously, the book's argument is based in part on data for the 1965-era M-16 rifle and early 5.56mm ammunition, rather than upon M-16s manufactured or rebuilt after

1967 (at which time the rifling was changed to improve stability and hitting probability) or upon later manufacture, improved versions of the M193 bullet, even though it is clear from the writing that more up-to-date information was at the researcher's disposal. Other theories offered in the book (and at the Conventional Weapons Conference) have been discounted in the meetings of experts at the Conventional Weapons Conference to the point that there is no proposal regarding small-caliber, high-velocity weapons under consideration for the forthcoming conference session.

Anti-personnel Weapons is an extensive but not comprehensive treatment of modern military weaponry. While voluminous, it is so skewed in its intent that it contributes little to the subject. Many of its conclusions, reached through simplistic or convoluted argumentation, have proved to be without foundation when tested in the forum of international negotiations. More galling than its deliberate inaccuracy, however, is that much of the content of *Anti-personnel Weapons* is based on data provided in the course of the technical exchange of information with U.S. military authorities. That material in turn has been skewed to place the United States in the worst possible light while advancing an opposing cause. If there is any lesson in this book, it is that our oft-times open exchange of technical information should be viewed as not always working to our advantage.

W. HAYS PARKS

Symonds, Craig L. *Navalists and Anti-navalists: the Naval Policy Debate in the United States, 1785-1827*. Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1980. 252pp.

Craig Symonds' book is one of particular interest to the Naval War College. It is a piece of original research that was inspired by the author's

experience as a professor of strategy at the War College, and it is a direct application of several ideas that are raised in the Strategy and Policy course. This, in itself, is an unusual attribute. As anyone who has taught or taken the course will readily appreciate, there are few books that start and carry forward in the particular areas on which that course focuses. Usually, one must read books written for other purposes in order to view the many aspects in the interrelationship between strategy and policy.

In order to explore the opposing viewpoints that affect the formulation of policy, Professor Symonds focuses on the public debate in Congress during the early years of the Republic, between 1785 and 1827. He dispassionately examines these viewpoints and defines their basic outlook and concerns. In the process he very effectively supersedes the earlier work of Harold and Margaret Sprout in examining these issues. While such earlier historians have scoffed at the Republican opponents of the Navy, Symonds shows that they had very legitimate concerns. The navalists who supported the construction of a large Navy were driven by a vision of the United States holding the balance of power in Europe. To antinavalists, this was an impractical and irresponsible course at a time when the young nation barely had the resources to deal with the Indians on the western frontier. In short, this is the debate between those who see the proper role of the Navy as one of protecting direct and immediate national interests and those who value the role of the Navy in the broad context of international affairs. While the broader viewpoint includes that of defense, the narrower interest does not accept the implications of an international role. Quite clearly, the political debate related here is very much a part of the historical debate between "blue-water" and "continental" strategy. While historians have tended to view