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The Generals' War : The Inside Story Of The Conflict In The Gulf



Synopsis

Michael R. Gordon and General Bernard E. Trainor provide a definitive, behind-the-scenes account and analysis of the planning and execution of the Gulf War. While one war was being waged against Iraq, another was being fought among the generals themselves. "The Generals' War" offers unvarnished portraits of the top military commanders, challenges the performances of Powell, Schwarzkopf, and their generals, and provides disturbing information about the power struggles within the American high command. Using previously undisclosed military documents, "The Generals' War" goes beyond what happened to explain why and how, exploding myths that have crept into other accounts of the war.

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Customer Reviews

Drawing on interviews with senior officials and newly declassified documents, Gordon and Trainor provide a behind-the-scenes look at the Gulf War's generalship. The dominant figure, then-chairman of the joint chiefs General Colin Powell, is spotlighted as a politico-military maestro overseeing the dawn of a new era in military technology. In their review of the short, violent, one-sided war, the authors uncover the problems of cooperation among coalition forces and reveal details of interservice tensions, as well as difficulties within the U.S. branches themselves. This meticulous reconstruction of American leadership in Desert Shield/Desert Storm presents the conflict as a laboratory for testing new weapons and doctrine and the services' capacity for cooperation in the field. It also serves as an object lesson in the failure of deterrence and the problem of war termination, with a discussion of President Bush's premature cease-fire order. Gordon is chief New

York Times Pentagon correspondent; Trainor is military columnist for the Times. Photos not seen by PW. Copyright 1994 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

If the Vietnam War was conducted by politicians in Washington, the war for Kuwait was, according to New York Times correspondent Gordon and retired general Trainor, our "generals' war." The authors astutely conclude that President Bush understood what his predecessors never did. Neither Johnson nor Nixon, nor for that matter National Security Council adviser Henry Kissinger, allowed the military to wage a winning war. The lesson was well learned by the savvy Gen. Colin Powell, chair of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, who directed his subordinates to lash out against the Iraqis with everything we had save for nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons. Kuwait was not Vietnam, however, and the unmotivated Iraqis were not the Vietcong. Aggrandized as "the world's fourth largest military," the enemy fizzled away within hours when confronted with the world's premier military force. Thus, it came as no surprise that Washington won the battle, but with Saddam Hussein still in power four years after hostilities ended, has it won the war? This cogent analysis provides several disturbing answers worthy of our attention. Recommended for informed lay readers and specialists. Joseph A. Kechichian, Rand Corp., Santa Monica, Cal. Copyright 1994 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

This was a well-written, factual book which provided insight. The book gave a good look into the interactions and personalities of the commanders of the First Gulf War. The explanations of many of the actions and decisions was more obvious. There is enough information to lead a person down good research paths.

I was in the Persian Gulf (Saudi Arabia) in the U.S. Army, from October '90 to August '91 as part of Desert Shield/Storm. This was the first book I've read on the subject. The ground war was so short (100 hours), and was such an anti-climax after waiting months for something to happen, that I didn't feel any book would be very good reading. This book was very good, though not great. Very revealing. The first part of the book leading up to the air campaign kind of dragged a bit at times. It was interesting to read about the preparations at the higher levels, and the in-fighting amongst the services. Saddam Hussein's blunders early on are explained very well. I had never heard of any of these arguments before. Had Saddam waited a few months more to invade Kuwait, the U.S. military would have been in the midst of a huge drawdown in personnel, and we would have had even more

problems coming up with the forces to act against him. (The draw down did happen, starting in late 1991 after all the units had returned.) The book left me with a very negative view on Colin Powell. He was willing to leave 400,000 troops sitting in the desert (99% of us who would be living in tents) for over a year waiting for economic sanctions to work. Go to Death Valley and live in a tent, General!!! Once the air campaign starts, the book reads like a Tom Clancy novel. Very riveting. General Schwarzkopf comes off as an egotistical hothead, and a bit of a 'screw-up'. He fails to seriously heed intelligence on the poor morale and combat effectiveness of the Iraqi troops. There also seemed to be a lot of blundering getting the ground campaign off on the right track. Schwarzkopf was also overly generous to the Iraqis after their defeat. He allowed them to fly helicopters, which they used to slaughter thousands who rose up against Saddam. General McCaffrey, who commanded the 24th Mech Division, comes off as one of the Army's best generals. Too bad he wasn't in charge of the whole operation. After reading this book I realized that this was not such a great victory as advertised. Mainly due to a very political JCS Chairman (Powell), various other politicians, and an egotistical (Jonathan Winters look alike) General Schwarzkopf, who had his memoirs planned before it was all over. The military acronyms used might be a problem for someone never in the military, but the authors do a good job of explaining them at the outset. There is not too much 'high tech' mumbo jumbo either. The book flows decently.

I participated in Desert Shield/Storm, but at the worker bee level in Riyadh. This book gave a completely different picture of how our military leaders handled the build up and the war. I can honestly say that I'm glad I didn't know some of this as I probably would have been a lot more nervous about being there. I do believe the author captured how the Saudis really felt about us being there. The final word is we wouldn't have done any of this except for oil. Just look at Ukraine, Syria, Iraq, etc today.

So, you thought that the US really kicked butt during Operation Desert Shield/Desert Storm? I did -- until I read this book (required reading for a military studies course). What I had thought was a finely tuned, well oiled US political-military machine was a facade. Until reading this book, I never knew -- and thank goodness, neither (apparently) did Saddam Hussein or his cronies know -- how tenuous the early US military presence in Saudi Arabia was. I've heard it said that it's better to be lucky than good in battle; thankfully, the US forces were both lucky AND good in Desert Shield/Desert Storm. Read this book if you're interested in learning the un- (or under-) reported inside history of the Gulf War.

Retired US Army officer, staff, this was right up my alley!!!!

Unbelievable chaos going on at the top levels of the military.

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