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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

The authors provide interesting, behind-the-scenes accounts of the political and military players in this war, based on many interviews. What unfolds is far different from what was said publicly at the time. Occasionally, the New York Times reporter's and the retired Marine's apparent biases show through, detracting from an otherwise very good book. They seem to blame President Reagan's administration for not buying mine-clearing equipment for the Marines and the Navy, but then blame the Air Force--and not the administration--for using its money to buy items other than the latest survival radios for its aircrews. They also inaccurately claim that the Air Force developed a new doctrine for this war where they would be in charge of all theater airpower (a doctrinal concept developed by them during the North African campaign in World War II) and that the Strategic Air Command had controlled the B-52s deployed to Southeast Asia during the Viet Nam War (they

actually were operationally controlled by the Theater), as well as a few other inaccurate items regarding the Air Force. It became rather apparent that all Services that were not Marines (and to a lesser extent, Navy) were denigrated. An example is their claim that the Air Force required that friendly aircraft obtain two means to verify an unknown aircraft's identification before firing on it in order to hold down the Navy's 'kill' rate (since the Navy had not invested in the systems to install two separate means of identification on each of their aircraft, they needed to contact the AWACS to obtain the second means). The Viet Nam War demonstrated this requirement and for whatever reason, the Navy had not addressed it in the interim--which the authors evidently refused to say.

In "The Generals' War: The Inside Story of the Conflict in the Gulf," Michael R. Gordon and Bernard E. Trainor have crafted a fascinating work of military history. As the title indicates, the book places a heavy emphasis on the actions of the senior military officers involved in the planning and execution of the U.S.-led coalition's 1991 war against Iraq. In the preface, the authors note that this conflict "is without precedent in the annals of warfare. It was the dawn of a new era" (page x). In their acknowledgements section, the authors discuss in detail the research that went into the writing of this book. They note that they interviewed administration officials, diplomats, allied military officers, and intelligence experts; they observe further that some "talked on the record; others on a not-for-attribution basis." They also drew on written responses that former president George Bush provided to their questions. Their research is meticulously documented in a lengthy set of endnotes (pages 479-520), thus enhancing the book's credibility. The text is further enhanced by thirteen detailed and clearly drawn maps that illuminate many aspects of the war: the Iraqi air defense system, coalition force deployment and movement, locations of oil fields, and more. Also included are photographs of many of the senior leaders involved in the war. The book is full of fascinating details about many aspects of the war. The authors discuss the participation of various coalition forces in the campaign, as well as the diplomatic activities involving the USSR, Egypt, and other nations. Also discussed are friendly fire incidents and Iraqi POWs.

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