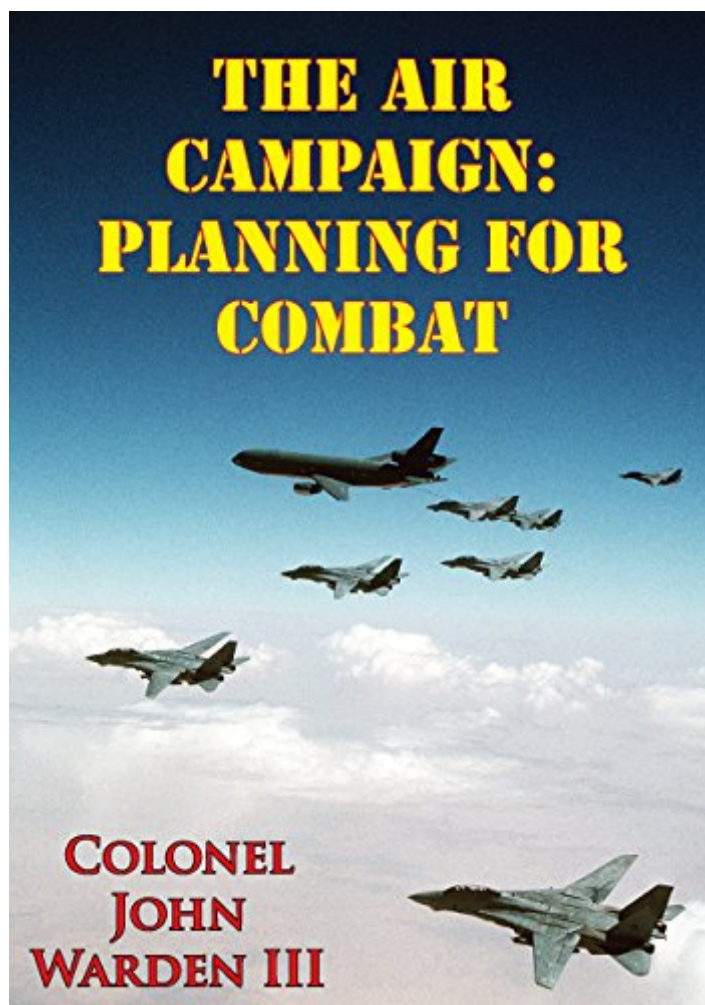


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The Air Campaign: Planning For Combat



Synopsis

In the short history of air warfare, no nation with superior air forces has ever lost a war to the force of enemy arms. Air superiority by itself, however, no longer guarantees victory. This book, one of the first analyses of the pure art of planning the aerial dimension of war, explores the complicated connection between air superiority and victory in war. In *The Air Campaign*, Colonel John A. Warden III focuses on the use of air forces at the operational level in a theater of war. The most compelling task for the theater commander, he argues, is translating national war objectives into tactical plans at operational levels. He presents his case by drawing on fascinating historical examples, stressing that the mastery of operational-level strategy can be the key to winning future wars. Colonel Warden shows us how to use air power more effectively—through rough mass, concentration, and economy of forces—because, he warns, the United States no longer holds an edge in manpower, production capacity, and technology. Simply put, an air force inferior in numbers must fight better and smarter to win. This book offers planners greater understanding of how to use air power for future air campaigns against a wide variety of enemy capabilities in a wide variety of air operations. As the reader will see, the classic principles of war also apply to air combat. One of the author's important contributions is to demonstrate that perception to those whose grave responsibility one day may be to plan and carry through a victorious air campaign.

Book Information

File Size: 2100 KB

Print Length: 204 pages

Publisher: Tannenber Publishing (August 15, 2014)

Publication Date: August 15, 2014

Sold by: Digital Services LLC

Language: English

ASIN: B06XGJJ7LM

Text-to-Speech: Enabled

X-Ray: Not Enabled

Word Wise: Enabled

Lending: Not Enabled

Enhanced Typesetting: Not Enabled

Best Sellers Rank: #493,421 Paid in Kindle Store (See Top 100 Paid in Kindle Store) #33

in Kindle Store > Kindle eBooks > History > Americas > United States > Military History >

Operation Desert Storm #81 in [Books > History > Military > United States > Operation Desert Storm](#) #186 in [Kindle Store > Kindle eBooks > History > Americas > United States > Military History > Iraq War](#)

Customer Reviews

John Warden was the strategist of the air campaign in the 1991 Gulf War. In 1998, he updated his influential book. A must read for anyone interested in the military, its past, present and future.

Colonel John A. Warden III was one of the most distinguished officers of his generation. A veteran fighter pilot, he was--is--as well a true defense intellectual--not the sort of individual often touted by the so-called "defense reform movement," but a true warrior-scholar in the classic image of, say, a J. F. C. Fuller--or a George Patton. Not one to shy away from controversy, Warden was convinced in the 1980's that the United States Air Force--had strayed away from its first principles. It had become a stove-piped, tribal organization, riven by discord and confusion between its "strategic" and "tactical" communities. Warden, in this brilliant work (written as a thesis at the National Defense University), posited an exciting new vision of the centrality of air power in national defense. This book served as an important departure point for the service's subsequent "Global Reach--Global Power" strategic planning framework issued in 1990. By that time, Warden was running Checkmate, a key office in Air Force planning. Through his own initiative and vision, he and a small team of "weapons officers" planned Instant Thunder, the first major response to Saddam Hussein's aggression in the Gulf. Warden briefed Instant Thunder to the Air Force Vice Chief of Staff (the Chief was away), and then on his suggestion to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, Gen. Colin Powell. Powell sent him to CENTCOM to brief Norman Schwarzkopf. His reaction was enthusiastic, and Warden was directed to brief Instant Thunder in the Gulf, to the CENTAF air component commander, General Charles Horner. Horner, brilliant in his own right, accepted much of what Warden said. But the personal chemistry between the two men was bad, and Warden returned to the States, leaving behind a small staff of acolytes and experts, most notably Lt. Col. David A. Deptula. It was the partnership of Deptula, Gen. Buster Glosson, Gen. Horner, and (back in Checkmate) John Warden that made the Desert Storm air campaign a success. After the war, Warden became commander of the Air Command and Staff College, making notable (and badly needed) changes to its curriculum. This book is a "must read" by anyone who would consider themselves a military and/or air power professional. There are Americans alive today because of John Warden's work. Warden never made general, largely because of petty jealousies by senior

people above him. He was--is--a consummate professional and true patriot: never complaining, never self-advocating, always keeping true to his core beliefs. But his truest legacy is this book and the thinking it has inspired--thinking that has led to five notable American victories over the last decade. Buy it, read it, keep it, use it!

John Warden's book earned high praise because of its author's role in planning operation Desert Storm, but although the book is a very good synthesis of air warfare theory it is not either groundbreaking or revolutionary. In fact most of its arguments were presented for the first time by the pioneers of air power of the 1920s and 30s like Giulio Duhet and William Mitchell. Warden's contribution has more to do with the revival of those forgotten theories and the presentation of a complete picture of aerial operations instead of inventing new methods of war. Central to his thesis is the idea that air superiority is crucial, that a campaign will be lost if the enemy has it, that in many circumstances it alone can win a war, and that its possession is needed before other actions on the ground or in the air can be undertaken. Warden also places emphasis on thorough training saying that if something is going to be done in war, it ought to be practiced in peace, and if it has not been practiced, losses are likely to be high and the plan is unlikely to go as expected. He analyzes the three kinds of interdiction (distant, intermediate and close) and he gives an interesting definition of the term "close air support": "It is an air operation that theoretically could and would be done by ground forces on their own, if sufficient troops or artillery were available". The author repeats often the great value of striking the enemy's center of gravity, that timing is everything in the commitment of air reserves and that ground and naval forces can serve as an adjunct to air forces in the battle for air superiority. His opinion that fighting defensively is the worst way to fight an air war is universally accepted as is his thesis that numbers are important, so important that a primary goal of the operational commander ought to be to make sure that his forces outnumber the enemy every time they meet. Modern research using the Lancaster equations has also proved his argument that the large force almost always inflicts greater absolute casualties on the smaller force and that it also suffers less in the process. John Warden also explains in the Epilogue how his concept of ideas was implemented in the Desert Storm campaign of 1991. In that case the enemy was visualized as a target system of five concentric rings (leadership, key production, infrastructure, population and field forces) with the leadership ring at the center. In the case of Iraq, the US goal was "to reduce the energy level of the entire system enough to reach our peace objectives" which were to eject "Iraq out of Kuwait and an Iraq that would not be a strategically threatening regional superpower for the next decade". On the minus side of the book are the extremely poor black and white pictures.

Col. Warden adds new material to this important work on strategy, especially new material on what happened after the Gulf War. This book is many things. It is a history of airpower. It is a fresh look at the application of airpower. It is a guide for anyone in the military or business world who wants to compete or attack a system. Very readable. With Col Warden's reputation as the architect of the Air Campaign against Iraq, he has demonstrated that he can apply his ideas in real world situations. Outstanding read.

A classic book on how to think strategically about military campaigns. Must read for all airmen

This book should be mandatory reading for all military officers regardless of branch of service.

Well done. Thanks.

A fresh and renovated review on a complicated topic such as Strategy. Interesting and updated points of view with a simple and easy language. A must for any military aviator.

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