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Best Laid Plans

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ment as a success for naval history and experimental archaeology. Four authors discuss the USS *Monitor* project, the importance of the ship and the establishment of a national marine sanctuary over its remains. Among the authors who offer important reassessments, Bruce Collins discusses naval power in the Maori, Ashanti, and Boer wars and calls for better recognition of naval power as a feature of British imperial expansion. Edward Miller explains that War Plan Orange was not simple at all, but complex and adaptable. "War Plan Orange persevered for forty years and eventually won the war. What more can one ask of a great plan?" Marc Milner directs us to the contribution—and unexpected consequence—of the Royal Canadian Navy in the battle of the Atlantic, above all in shipping control and naval intelligence. During this campaign, undertaken in close coordination with the United States Navy, the RCN found "its north American roots." Lawrence Allin writes an arresting argument for truth-in-labelling for the battleship. The mystique of the battle-line was little tested in war, and battleship doctrine became a parochial shibboleth. Putting purposefulness back in its rightful place, Allin says of the battleship's role in the post-atomic age: "It must be seen and used for what it is: a weapon of high cost and great power and one of discrete and limited abilities."

GEORGE BAER
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Martin, David C. and Walcott, John.

Best Laid Plans. New York: Harper & Row, 1988. 392pp. \$22.50

Best Laid Plans is a tightly written tale of treachery, heroism, and Washington intrigue—a real page turner. It could also be a history of national security affairs during the Reagan administration. It covers the major headline-capturing events of the 1980s, from the hostage rescue attempt in Iran, to the bombings of the U.S. Embassy and Marine compound in Beirut, air strikes on Libya, and arms-for-hostages deals.

Best Laid Plans is the best study yet written of contemporary terrorism and our nation's response. CBS Pentagon correspondent David Martin and *Wall Street Journal* national security correspondent John Walcott have teamed to produce an exhaustively researched, comprehensive look at a problem that both threatens our security and vexes our response mechanisms. The book excels on two planes.

First, the authors have captured the human impact of terrorism, ranging from the ordeal of U.S. hostages held in Lebanon to the fears and triumphs of the operators at Desert One, the pilots who forced down the Egyptian plane carrying the hijackers of the *Achille Lauro* and the crews who participated in the retaliatory bombing of Libya. They delve into the emotional and political pressures that defined the conflicts among, and crucial decisions made by, the White House, State Department, Defense Department, and Central Intelligence Agency. This

approach makes *Best Laid Plans* a fascinating study in the human condition. More importantly, however, understanding the strengths and frailties of the human race in the face of terrorism is essential to understanding the book's principal message.

The second plane explores the dynamics of the U.S. government's response to terrorism and, in the process, shows why it is so difficult for us to "win" the war.

The fundamental premises are well understood. Death and destruction inflicted by terrorism are not an end in themselves. Rather, they bring into question the ability of civilized nations to keep their citizens secure and ultimately to govern themselves effectively. Terrorism is more akin to garden variety crime than invasion, and the response resembles police work more than military activity. Terrorists hold the initiative in choice of time, place, target, and type of act. Terrorist tactics evolve as response mechanisms improve—hostage-taking (with the exception of Lebanon) is no longer in vogue because it is an act susceptible to resolution by assault (as the SAS demonstrated in securing the Iranian Embassy in London in 1980). Overlaying these confounding factors is the moral fiber of the United States that abhors loss of life among innocents in the course of retaliating against our antagonists, and draws the line at assassination.

All of this influenced the Reagan response to terrorism, but above and beyond, the administration found its

efforts undercut by structural weakness. The gutting of the intelligence community in the 1970s left us nearly devoid of the assets we needed to provide the uniquely precise (and difficult to obtain) intelligence essential to dealing with terrorism: prior to, during, and after the fact. Political imperatives inevitably intervened in military planning to produce suboptimal results. Conventional military preparedness proved unequal to terrorist attack. The Marines in Beirut were not necessarily mentally or physically prepared for a car bomb. Neither was the aircraft carrier USS *John F. Kennedy*, one of the most powerful warships in the world, until .50-caliber machine guns were mounted on her catwalks.

Most troubling in Martin and Walcott's tale, however, is the course of interagency friction that treated an issue of undisputed national importance with the same bureaucratic rivalry properly reserved for lesser matters. The resulting frustration and inaction led Lieutenant Colonel Oliver North to attempt other, unorthodox solutions.

In short, *Best Laid Plans* convincingly shows why there are no easy answers. Certainly, U.S. capabilities have improved, in antiterrorism (protection), counterterrorism (resolution and retaliation) and intelligence. Concurrently, however, terrorism has grown more sophisticated, as the bombing of Pan Am 103 demonstrated. The bottom line is that terrorism and our response will remain a game of cat-and-mouse.

Recognizing this, Martin and Walcott argue that the law may be the best weapon in the war against terrorism. In their words, "The law treats terrorists as criminals and helps strip the veneer of martyrdom and heroism from their crimes." If, indeed, justice is the key, the conviction of Fawaz Yunis in a U.S. Federal Court for the 1985 hijacking of a Jordan Air airliner may be the first, albeit small, step in turning the corner in this war.

Buy the book. It's excellent.

R. LYNN RYLANDER
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Washington, D.C.

Scott, Harriet Fast and Scott, William F. *Soviet Military Doctrine: Continuity, Formulation, and Dissemination*. Boulder, Col.: Westview Press, 1988. 315pp. \$45

Harriet and William Scott's latest book on the Soviet military traces the development and impact of the doctrine of the armed forces of the U.S.S.R. since 1917. In doing so, it clearly distinguishes doctrine in Soviet terms from what has been commonly discussed in the West. Soviet doctrine is divided into two parts—political and military technical. The Scotts demonstrate that the offensive has been a central feature of Soviet military doctrine from its very beginning, following the revolution in 1917. Consequently, their analysis suggests that the Soviet military at least is wedded to a scientific/dialectical approach to the

study of doctrine, and they are skeptical of current pronouncements by the leaders of the U.S.S.R. that their doctrine is now purely defensive. Although the Soviet analysis of war changed dramatically following the advent of nuclear weapons, the primary motivation was to insure that the overall correlation of forces (composed of economics, science/technical, moral, and military) remain in their favor.

In political terms the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) plays a leading role in the formulation of doctrine. As such, the party demands that the following key questions be continuously reexamined in the context of the Laws of War in developing military doctrine and corresponding military forces. What will be the nature of future war? What kind of armed forces will be needed? How should the nation prepare? What methods will be best in prosecuting future conflict? The Scotts also review the various organs of the government and party that play key roles in answering these questions and formulating doctrine. This includes a useful discussion of the Council of Defense which is little known in the West. Political change such as *glasnost* and *perestroika*, therefore, are interpreted by the authors merely as an effort to keep the Laws of War and, therefore, correlation of forces of the U.S.S.R.

As with their previous contributions on the armed forces of the U.S.S.R., this book clearly expands our understanding of Soviet military thought and organization. It is,