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The Ships and Aircraft of the U.S. Fleet

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were legitimate doubts that such a fleet could really do what it was supposed to do (intimidate Japan). The same kinds of problems beset both the Soviet Union and the United States today. The solutions are not clear. What is impressive about *The Soviet and Other Communist Navies*, however, is that these problems and possible approaches to them are laid out in one place and in a nonclassified form.

Finally, a word for readers who cannot take the time to read all the papers: some of the commentaries and introductions are in themselves worth reading. Bradford Dismukes provides a good summary of the major analytical approaches to Soviet naval policy in Part One of the volume, and the commentaries by Rear Admiral Thomas Brooks, Dr. Roger Barnett, and retired Admiral Harry Train do what the whole volume aims to do—stimulate serious thinking about military prospects and problems. *The Soviet and Other Communist Navies* is a wonderful summary of current perspectives on, and knowledge of, its topic. Though lengthy, it lends itself both to careful study and to thoughtful browsing.

THOMAS HONE
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Polmar, Norman. *The Ships and Aircraft of the U.S. Fleet*. Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 1987. 591pp. \$29.95

Since its initial publication by James C. Fahey 49 years and 13 editions ago, *The Ships and Aircraft of*

the U.S. Fleet has been a well-known reference book. However, under Norman Polmar, it has evolved into a truly outstanding work. Today it stands as the definitive source of information on the U.S. Navy, presenting a wealth of concise, well-organized data. Ships, aircraft, weapons, and electronic systems are described in detail with accompanying tables of characteristics, ample photographic coverage, and a glossary. The book's large format contributes to easy utility, allowing the photographs to appear in a size sufficient to be useful.

Particularly impressive is the magnitude of the "update" between the 13th and 14th editions. Unlike many so-called "revised" editions, in which a few sentences are added at the end of each section or chapter, this edition truly is a "complete revision." Literally every photograph is new. I reached page 217 before finding a photo (of an LCVP) duplicated from the 13th edition. Even ships in reserve have new photographs. Additionally, line illustrations from the previous edition have been redrawn. The descriptive text and characteristics were updated and rewritten as appropriate. As a consequence, the information is current and useful.

The chapters on ships and aircraft comprise the "core" of the book. Organized into chapters by ship types, each class is covered by a minimum of one full page (9 1/2" x 9 1/2") with an accompanying photograph, text, and characteristics table. Ship classes containing numer-

ous units or having particular importance are allotted several pages. As would be expected, there is extensive coverage of the *Iowa*-class battleships, *Seawolf*-class attack submarines, and the *Arleigh Burke*-class destroyers. An equally comprehensive range of information is provided on the amphibious force, mine warfare units, service force, and auxiliaries. New initiatives described in these areas include *Wasp*-class LHDs, LCACs, and the follow-on Swath Tagoos ships. A brief section at the end of each ship chapter recalls significant initiatives involving that type of ship since World War II. For example, in the aircraft carrier chapter the end notes deal with post-World War II carrier programs that were never executed, including the *United States* (CVA 58), the Sea Control Ship, the VSTOL support ship, and various medium-sized carriers. Naval aircraft are covered in equally comprehensive detail, with one chapter dedicated to specific aircraft types, while a second chapter discusses organization and employment.

Other chapters in the core section cover the Coast Guard, weapons, electronic systems, and assault amphibious vehicles. All the current and planned radars, EW systems, sonar, missiles, and guns receive coverage similar to that given ships and aircraft (photo, text, and data table), though on a smaller scale. Even the ships and aircraft of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) are described.

In addition, nine other chapters provide a useful overview of the structure and organization of the Navy. These begin with Mr. Polmar's assessment of the overall "State of the Fleet" which presents an excellent, yet concise, analysis of the issues facing the Navy in the future. An evaluation of these issues as they affect specific communities (air, surface combatant, amphibious, submarine, etc.) is also included. Subsequent chapters present a broad range of information, including a chapter on naval organization that, among other subjects, details the specific units assigned to the various fleets and marine forces. Other chapters discuss such subjects as the Marine Corps, the Reserves, strategic sealift, and personnel.

This book is an excellent reference work and provides one with an easily accessible central source of information. Its large size and easy to read style make it a pleasure to use. It is the perfect complement to Mr. Polmar's similarly formatted *Guide to the Soviet Navy*. Together they form an essential aid to anyone interested in the maritime environment.

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Grover, David H. *U.S. Army Ships and Watercraft of World War II*. Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 1987. 280pp. \$44.95

The Navy has a lot of ships and boats. Clearly, the Navy is proud of