

1979

Soviet Naval Developments

J. S. Hurlburt

Norman Polmar

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/nwc-review>

Recommended Citation

Hurlburt, J. S. and Polmar, Norman (1979) "Soviet Naval Developments," *Naval War College Review*: Vol. 32 : No. 7 , Article 21.
Available at: <https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/nwc-review/vol32/iss7/21>

This Book Review is brought to you for free and open access by the Journals at U.S. Naval War College Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Naval War College Review by an authorized editor of U.S. Naval War College Digital Commons. For more information, please contact repository.inquiries@usnwc.edu.

120 NAVAL WAR COLLEGE REVIEW

lation, except in developing logistical and force package options. But of course he is talking about PPBS as we normally think of it, rather than the way Palmer uses it.

If Palmer means that McNamara's thought processes played a major part in Vietnam decisionmaking he is quite correct, but that is not quite the same as saying that PPBS played a major part. McNamara's major failure was not in matters of technical management, but rather in the strategic direction the war was permitted to take. Let us recognize that there were major domestic constraints on McNamara, based primarily upon Presidential perceptions—and here is where LBJ comes in. The Great Society dominated Johnson's thinking and he wanted no public debate that would jeopardize it. This meant no debate on a Reserve callup, and no debate on the budget. This latter point meant that for a time there had to be some concealment of what the actual costs of the war were going to be.

McNamara for his part became (by October 1966) disenchanted with the military approach in Vietnam, but he was reluctant to pay the price of speaking out against the strategy of the ground commander. He did in August 1967 speak out against the bombing of the North before the Stennis Subcommittee. His testimony was a remarkable *tour de force*. Although he was unsuccessful before that body, he did set the stage for LBJ's diplomatic initiative the following month—the so-called San Antonio formula—which relaxed somewhat U.S. requirements for discussions with the North Vietnamese.

Those are a few of the broader issues to be considered in evaluating the role of PPBS. This reviewer is not uncomfortable with the thesis that in Foreign/Defense decisionmaking, process is frequently more important than substance. However, Palmer has taken this a step further and made it central. In evaluating his effort, I have

to fall back on that ambivalent verdict, unique as far as I know to Scotland's judicial system, Not Proven.

DOUGLAS KINNARD
University of Vermont

Polmar, Norman, ed. *Soviet Naval Developments*. Annapolis: The Nautical and Aviation Publishing Company of America, 1979. 118pp.

If the title sounds slightly familiar, it's probably because it is. Most readers will quickly recognize this book as a commercial version of the CNO publication *Understanding Soviet Naval Developments* first published in 1974 and most recently revised in January 1978. Nautical and Aviation Publishing Company acknowledges this, pointing out that it was Norman Polmar who compiled and edited the original work for the Director of Naval Intelligence and the Chief of Information and that Soviet naval developments are occurring so rapidly that one can hardly keep up with them. Thus a 1979 edition complete with hard cover and bright red jacket is deemed necessary.

There's not much new under all of that. Excerpts from the FY80 Annual Report by SECDEF Harold Brown and Admiral Hayward's Posture Statement have been substituted for those of SECDEF Donald Rumsfeld and Admiral Holloway in Appendix A. Appendix E has been changed from a recommended reading list to brief biographic sketches of the Soviet naval leadership. Otherwise a minor modification to a table here and a new picture there are the only recognizable changes, and one needs to do a page-by-page comparison to detect those.

All of this should not diminish the fact that the original publication was very well done indeed and all succeeding editions have built on this solid foundation. As a result, *Soviet Naval Developments* is an excellent source for those newly in need of a primer on the Soviet

PROFESSIONAL READING 121

Navy. It is not sufficiently different in substance from its predecessors to warrant further consideration by others.

J.S. HURLBURT
Commander, U.S. Navy

Starry, Donn A. *Mounted Combat In Vietnam*. Washington, D.C.: Department of the Army, 1978. 250pp.

Mounted Combat In Vietnam is an unclassified account of the combat actions of a select set of U.S. Army and other free world units during the period March 1965-January 1973 in South Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos. It describes tactical operations conducted by maneuver forces using tanks, armored cavalry, air cavalry, and mechanized infantry supported by mobile artillery and engineers. As part of the U.S. Army's Vietnam Studies' series, its aim is to describe some of the more salient aspects of the war in Southeast Asia in anticipation of the usual delay before official histories are published. The monograph was written by a group of U.S. Army Vietnam combat veterans under the direction of General Starry and is based primarily on official war records and personal interviews.

Mounted Combat In Vietnam is not a history of the Vietnam war: it makes no attempt to document every unit and every battle nor does it list in detail the lessons that may be learned from the conflict. It is a sketch of mounted units and tank crewmen, mechanized infantrymen, armored cavalrymen, and air cavalrymen. It also highlights the historical, political, military, and environmental forces and influences with which, in addition to their battlefield foes, they had to contend. Most signifi-

cant among these include; the influence of French and Vietnamese use of armor in Vietnam upon the thinking of U.S. military commanders and staffs; misperceptions of the nature of the Vietnam battlefield and the enemy force; and classic examples of organizational processes and governmental/bureaucratic politics upon force structure and materiel development decisionmaking.

Mounted Combat In Vietnam is a unique work. More than just its subject matter is noteworthy. Despite a somewhat faulty organization and long sections of purely historical value, few other works so candidly assess the combat performance of U.S. ground maneuver units in Southeast Asia and the support systems that prepared, equipped, and maintained them. Even fewer have addressed the "nitty gritty" aspects of the war, most important to a professional soldier, in so comprehensive a manner. Mounted operations occurred in all four Vietnam Corps areas, as well as in Cambodia and Laos, over an 8-year period. Few U.S. Army officers can claim to have experienced the broad scope of challenges they provided.

Mounted Combat In Vietnam is highly recommended to all military professionals, although readers not familiar with ground combat operations may have difficulty knowing how important are some of the points the authors make. While describing "the last war," it undeniably highlights the important timeless tenets of mobile warfare, as applicable to the European battlefield of the future as they were to the battles along QL-13.

EDWARD A. BRYLA
Major, U.S. Army