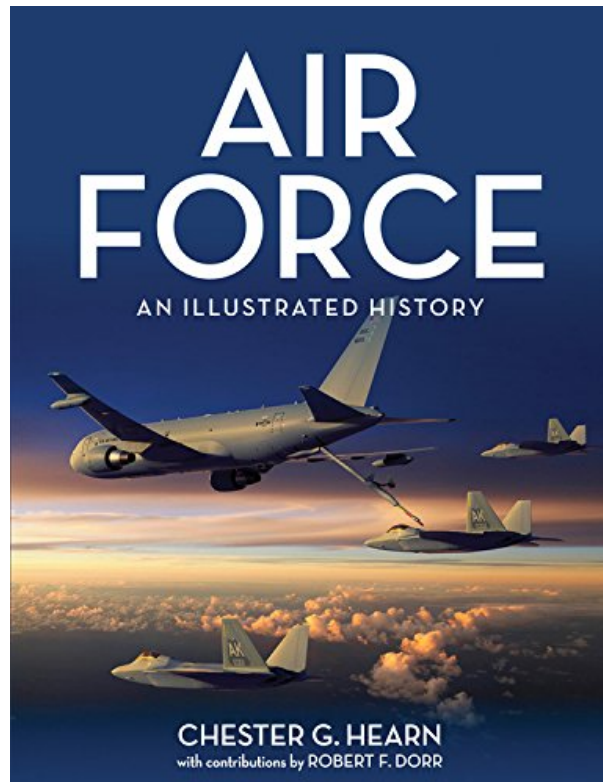


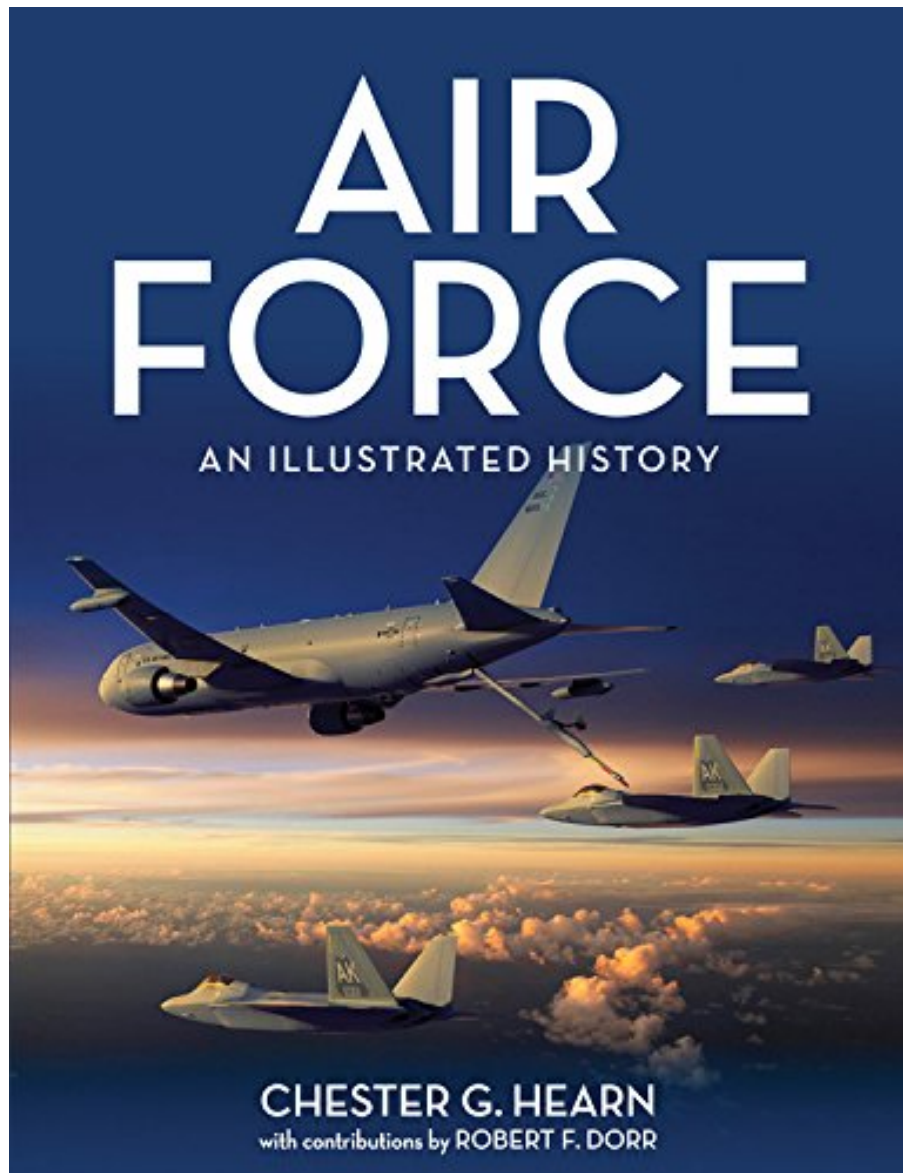
AIR FORCE: AN ILLUSTRATED HISTORY

BY CHESTER G. HEARN



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About the Author

Chester G. Hearn is an American military veteran and historian. He is the author of more than twenty books, including *Six Years of Hell: Harpers Ferry During the Civil War* and *George Washington's Schooners: The First American Navy*. Three of his books have been History Book Club selections. He lives in Erie, Pennsylvania.

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AIR FORCE: AN ILLUSTRATED HISTORY BY CHESTER G. HEARN PDF

Read the entire history of how the USAF flies, fights, and wins.

From its beginning in 1907 as the Aeronautical Division of US Army's Signal Corps, with just one officer and two enlisted men, the United States Air Force has grown to become the foremost aerial armed force. American aviators performed valiantly in World War I with intrepid pilots such as Eddie Rickenbacker and Frank Luke leading the way.

Between the wars, aviation, commercial, and military resources around the world grew by leaps and bounds as the numbers of aircraft in service and their capabilities tremendously increased. Although the Army Air Corps, as it was known at the time, was no better prepared for World War II than the rest of the army, it had developed a highly professional corps of experienced officers who would be able to take advantage of the latest American aircraft technology like the B-17 Flying Fortress and the P-51 Mustang.

With the end of the war and the creation of an independent armed force in 1947, the United States Air Force leapt into the jet age with such icons as the F-86 Sabre and the remarkable B-52 Stratofortress. Air Force: An Illustrated History is a book that no enthusiast of the world's largest, most powerful, and most versatile air-combat force will want to miss!

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Most helpful customer reviews

22 of 26 people found the following review helpful.

Error-Filled USAF History!

By Mike O'Connor

AIR FORCE, AN ILLUSTRATED HISTORY is the worst single-volume history of the USAF I can remember reading! It's so filled with errors, misstatements, etc. you wonder whether the author thinks he knows the subject better than he actually does or he's just sloppy in writing up what he knows. It's obvious from the book Zenith Press didn't bother to double-check Hearn's manuscript before publishing it. Whatever the reason, AIR FORCE, AN ILLUSTRATED HISTORY is one badly done history.

Here's a random sampling of MISTAKES/MISTATEMENTS. p.31: All the sources I've seen credit the Lafayette Escadrille with 40-41 kills not 57. p.32: That's Capt. Alan Wilkinson not Wilkenson. p.33: None of Lufbery's 17 kills were claimed with flying with the 94th Squadron. p.50: The British did not get North American to build P-40s; Curtiss just built more plants. The Brits' request got NAA to develop the P-51. p.56: Donovan not Donavon Berlin designed the P-40. p.56: The AVG made their name flying P-40Bs not Es. (p.61/66: Why are pix of B-25s included in the 8th AF section; the 8th didn't fly 'em). p.70: The 'Tidal Wave' B-24 groups became separated because they were cruising at different speeds not because of heavy overcast. p.71: The P-47 served with (1) the 9th AF not 9th Fighter Command and that was (2) in England not Africa. p.71 again: "The P-61...never met performance expectations;" really!?! p.75: The 12th AF flew B-26s in 1943/44 not A-26s. p.92: B-24s and B-25s did not take part in the Battle of Midway; B-17s and B-26s did. p.98: Tom Lanphier did not lead the Yamamoto mission; John Mitchell did. And only one squadron - the 339th - was involved not three as Hearn alleges. And on and on and...

Let's talk MISCAPTIONED PHOTOGRAPHS. p.37: Frank Luke is standing by a downed Halberstadt biplane not a Drachen. p.64: Those 381st BG B-17s are on a training hop not on their way to Wilhelmshaven. p.74: The ball gunner is on a B-24 not a B-17. p.70: The right-hand B-24 pix was not taken during the Tidal Wave raid but a later mission. p.79: Every publication I've ever seen gives Francis Gabreski's nickname as "Gabby" but Hearn calls him "Gabe!?!". p.81: The bottom photo shows a crashed Zero not a P-40. p.88: Great caption on the A-20; unfortunately the pix is of B-25s. p.89: Dick Bong did not get the MoH and then return to combat. And he downed 12 not 15 e/a on his last tour. p. 91: There are at least 4 mistakes in the '5th AF Aces' sidebar. p.98: The bottom photo doesn't show a P-38F but an unarmed photo recce bird. p.107: Those are C-47s not C-46s. And they're not flying the Hump; they're dropping supplies. For Pete's sake, you can see 30+ parachutes in the pix! There's more in that same vein but enough already.

On top of all that, Hearn misses the point on several important topics or gives an incomplete summary of important battles/campaigns. EXAMPLE #1: the August 1943 Regensburg/Schweinfurt mission was a critical test of the 8th AF's daylight bombing theory. They lost! Sixty bombers were downed and many more put out-of-commission after the raid. Those results forced 8th AF brass to (1) question their unswerving belief in daylight bombing and (2) curtail long-range missions for several months. Hearn, on the other hand, concludes (1) the mission struck a serious blow to the GAF's ability to keep planes in the air - No, it didn't! - and (2) it marked the beginning of 100s of long-range raids. Sorry but that ignores the fact that those raids almost came to a halt after the 8th replenished its ranks and went back to Schweinfurt in October only to lose another 60 a/c. Those losses plus others put the 8th AF's campaign in serious jeopardy. Only the arrival of P-51s allowed the 8th to continue long-range missions. EXAMPLE #2: B-29s over Korea. Hearn presents a summary of B-29 use that concludes that "the strategic bombing of North Korea met every expectation." That's gilding the lily. Somehow he fails to mention the fact that B-29 losses to MiG-15s got so bad in late 1951 that they were chased from the daylight skies of Korea and forced to fly night raids only. EXAMPLE

#3: Vietnam War air combat. Hearn's account of the aerial duels between US and NV units basically tails off after Operation Bolo; nothing on the fact that the VPAF were winning the air war in late 1967/early 1968; nothing on Topgun; nothing on the dismal USAF air-to-air record in 1972/73. Time and again Hearn doesn't give the reader the full story.

Short and sweet: Yes, the photos are nice but there's just too many mistakes in this book. Save your money and take a pass on this one.

4 of 4 people found the following review helpful.

Simple, but fantastic.

By Brendon

If you want a general and easy summary of the USAF, USAAF, and USAAC, then this is the book for you! Despite several small errors, the book gives a good understanding of the political and technical challenges and achievements that the Air Arm of the United States went through (All the way from the First World War to the current era. Highly recommended.

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful.

Could be more detailed. But nice enough.

By Steve K

I got this for an elderly man who wanted an Air Force Coffee Table Book for Christmas. This fits the bill. It's big enough, has a lot of pictures and descriptions. I just don't think it's complete. It doesn't go into all that much detail about the various equipment. It touches mainly upon planes, some pilots, etc, but it is by no means all-inclusive. It's nice enough, and arrived quickly and safely.

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About the Author

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