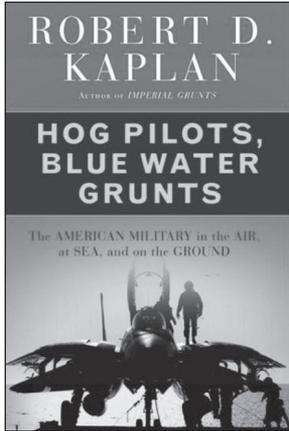


Book Reviews



Hog Pilots, Blue Water Grunts, by Robert D. Kaplan, Random House: New York, 2007, 388 pages, ISBN-10:1-4000-6133-4, \$27.95 (hardcover).

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Robert Kaplan is known for providing well-written commentary on events of the day. His unique travelogue writing style captures the reader, while serving as a vehicle for offering observations on larger issues.

In *Hog Pilots, Blue Water Grunts*, he effectively uses this device to deliver a compelling look at the U.S. military in action that manages to also offer provocative thoughts on how the military instrument of power can most effectively be used in the future.

Kaplan's premise is simple—in warfare of the future, the smaller the military footprint and the earlier the military is engaged, the more effective that military activity will be. He argues that low-profile engagements and use of proxies are the best use of the military instrument of power. This premise is the underpinning of every vignette he develops in this book. He examines the importance of personal relationships, understanding cultures, and decentralized initiative in the execution of policy decisions. He also does a commendable job of describing the unique culture of the military organizations he travelled with and observed.

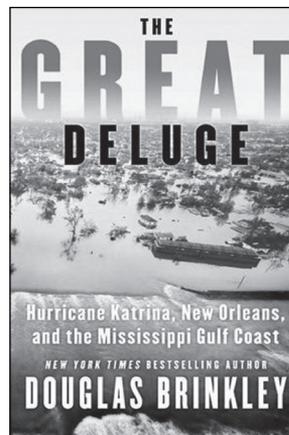
Kaplan takes readers on a whirlwind journey across the globe, introducing them to life on Navy destroyers and submarines, Marine platoons, Army Special Forces detachments, Air Force flying wings, and Defense Attaché Offices. He offers a smattering of history and geography to complement vignettes regarding the people who put boots on the ground. He clearly has a deep affinity with the Noncommissioned Officer Corps of all the Services.

The only criticism I can muster is that Kaplan is too invested in so-called elite formations. The only conventional Army unit he visits is the 172d Stryker Brigade, and he clearly considers it something apart from the rest of the conventional Army because of its unique capabilities. A thread of disdain for the larger institutional military runs through his work. Perhaps Kaplan is influenced by his close affinity with the unique units he travelled with. His specific and implied criticisms of the

conventional Army ring hollow. He doesn't invest the time with conventional units and conventional headquarters that he does with the unique and elite.

I highly recommend *Hog Pilots, Blue Water Grunts*. Kaplan is an engaging storyteller, offers interesting perspectives on political and international events, and makes interesting arguments concerning the use of military power. His observations about the future of military operations are worthy of reflective thought.

Reviewed by Lieutenant Colonel Stephen V. Tennant, United States Army (Retired), Assistant Professor, Command and General Staff College, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas.



The Great Deluge: Hurricane Katrina, New Orleans, and the Mississippi Gulf Coast, by Douglas Brinkley, Harper Perennial: New York, 2006, 678 pages, ISBN: 978-0-06-114849-1, \$17.95 (paper).

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The environment in which the United States Army provides support to civil authorities during disaster response is very complex. The dynamic interaction of local and national politics, crisis management, and general disorder requires understanding and preparation in order to effectively deal with disaster response. *The Great Deluge: Hurricane Katrina, New Orleans, and the Mississippi Gulf Coast* by Douglas Brinkley of Tulane University is one of the first accounts of Hurricane Katrina and her aftermath and effectively captures the feel of a disaster response, while highlighting the friction points.

Brinkley provides a compelling account of the events of 27 August to 3 September 2005, during Hurricane Katrina. He has unique perspective (and perhaps motivation) as an eyewitness to Katrina. His writing style is slightly sarcastic, but also engaging. His work is meticulously researched from contemporary sources, weaving together vignettes from New Orleans citizens, government leaders, and news accounts into

a gripping narrative. He takes a critical look at what happened in New Orleans and, to a lesser extent, the rest of the Gulf Coast and largely achieves his goal of writing a "...fast out of the gates history..." that enables "...holding city, state, and federal government officials responsible for their actions...."

He is unflinching in his description of events, dispensing both high praise and harsh criticism to key participants. He gives high marks to the United States Coast Guard, the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, the state of Texas, the city of Houston, and individual citizens too numerous to mention here. His harshest criticism is aimed at city officials and institutions in New Orleans, in particular Mayor Ray Nagin, Police Chief Eddie Compass, and the New Orleans Police Department. He is also very critical of Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff, whom he says should be accountable for much of the slow start to the federal response and, in particular, the ineptitude of the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

Brinkley is strangely reticent in his criticism of Governor Kathleen Blanco, assigning responsibility to the city and the federal government that perhaps should accrue to the Blanco administration. He is also quite critical of President Bush, with some justification. At times, he goes too far; for example, stating (sourced from one opinion article, after the fact) that the slow federal response was due in part to partisan political considerations. With all the administration mismanagement and slow decision making available to critique, this vignette seems unnecessary and inflammatory.

The good and bad of the Department of Defense response are highlighted throughout Brinkley's work. His major criticism of the military isn't the response, but rather the perceived slow start and heavy-handedness in dealing with local officials. Brinkley harshly criticizes the United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) for the failure of the levee systems and the loss of buffering wetlands in Louisiana. In doing so, he doesn't adequately address the involvement (or lack thereof) of the congress, state government, and local authorities. Even so, his criticisms are valid and should be studied and considered in order to provide more effective military disaster response in the future.

I highly recommend this book to all engineer officers. Support to civil authority, in particular disaster response, is a full-spectrum operation that the United States Army has executed many times. USACE and engineer troop units are typically deeply involved in disaster responses. Understanding the environment and reflecting on mistakes made in crisis is critical. This book offers a perspective that professionals should study and understand in order to be effective.

Reviewed by Lieutenant Colonel Stephen V. Tennant, United States Army (Retired), Assistant Professor, Command and General Staff College, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas.