



Hammer from Above: Marine Air Combat Over Iraq

Jay Stout

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In Operation Iraqi Freedom, the Marine Corps' ground campaign up the Tigris and Euphrates was notable for speed and aggressiveness unparalleled in military history. Little has been written, however, of the air support that guaranteed the drive's success. Paving the way for the rush to Baghdad was "the hammer from above"—in the form of attack helicopters, jet fighters, transport, and other support aircraft. Now a former Marine fighter pilot shares the gripping never-before-told stories of the Marines who helped bring to an end the regime of Saddam Hussein.

As Jay Stout reveals, the air war had actually been in the planning stages ever since the victory of Operation Desert Storm, twelve years earlier. But when Operation Iraqi Freedom officially commenced on March 20, 2003, the Marine Corps entered the fight with an aviation arm at its smallest since before World War II. Still, with the motto "Speed Equals Success," the separate air and ground units acted as a team to get the job done.

Drawing on exclusive interviews with the men and women who flew the harrowing missions, Hammer from Above reveals how pilots and their machines were tested to the limits of endurance, venturing well beyond what they were trained and designed to do. Stout takes us into the cockpits, revealing what it was like to fly these intense combat operations for up to eighteen hours at a time and to face incredible volumes of fire that literally shredded aircraft in midair during battles like that over An Nasiriyah .

With its dynamic descriptions of perilous flights and bombing runs, Hammer from Above is a worthy tribute to the men and women who flew and maintained the aircraft that so inspired their brothers in arms and terrified the enemy.

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