

Dunlap's Very Subjective Reading List for Air Force Judge Advocates

Brigadier General Charles J. Dunlap, Jr.

Is reading worth it? Absolutely! The legendary courtroom advocate Louis Nizer once said that reading five books about famous trials can equate to the experience of actually trying a case. More recently, a magazine reported some similar advice from Earl Nightingale, the “man who founded the self-help industry in the 1950s.” Nightingale counseled: “Read for an hour a day—about 4 percent of your week—in any subject you want to master. In 3 years’ time, you’ll be an expert in the field.”

Becoming an expert in the profession of arms ought to be the goal of everyone in uniform, but especially in the JAG Corps. Self-directed reading can help accomplish that goal. Accordingly, you will find below a book list that might help you gain that expertise. Most of these books are not law-related *per se*. Why? Well, besides the fact that I’m not smart enough to come up with a good law book list, knowing the law is often the easy part of being in the JAG Corps. What most junior (and many senior) JAG Corps people lack is a good foundation in the art of war. This list is largely aimed at rectifying that deficiency.

Of course, to provide legal services in context, it is imperative that we know and understand our client. Achieving that kind of insight cannot wait for professional military education (PME) courses; in any event, PME will not alone suffice. Real military professionals make self-study of human conflict in all its dimensions a life-long enterprise. There is really no other way except personal initiative.

My list is certainly not the only one. The Chief of Staff recently established a reading list for all Air Force members. This is a good starting point for your professional reading program, and it can be found online at <http://www.af.mil/library/csafreading/>. Some of the books appear on my list as well—I’ll mark them with an

asterisk.* You may find this helpful in determining where to start. Another interesting source of recommendations is the National Defense University’s reading list, which has links to the other services’ lists. It is found at <http://www.ndu.edu/info/ReadingList.cfm>.

As the title suggests, this is a very subjective list. There is really no magic to it; it is a collection of books that I happen to find useful. The selections do reflect my view that many operations in the future will still find a small “footprint,” where a JAG or paralegal will be functioning on staffs—perhaps as the only attorney or paralegal—and in situations where leadership ability will be sorely tested. Readability is a big qualifier as well. I’ve omitted many superb books (classics, in fact) solely because I thought they were too long or otherwise too difficult “reads” (even though several of the ones that made the list are challenging—for me anyway).

The list is designed to give you a broad intellectual foundation in military matters; it

is not, for example, aimed at providing technical answers to a lot of specific problems. Be warned, however, that some reputed military classics are missing, *e.g.*, Michael Shaara’s *The Killer Angels*—hey, I’m not a Civil War fanatic, so shoot me (only kidding!).

Although there are many books out there about Afghanistan and/or Gulf War II, there are only two to recommend at this point (*Air Power Against Terror* and *The Assassins’ Gate*). Neither one is a definitive text, but it is probably too soon to expect a considered history to emerge. (While I do find Yossef Bodansky’s, *The Secret History of the Iraq War* fun, it isn’t sufficiently credentialed to recommend.) And there are more gaps based on my personal tastes (and, unfortunately, my limited knowledge!). Consequently, it would be a good idea to gather recommendations from other people as well.

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Please don't get intimidated by the number of books on the list. Believe it or not, I've considerably shortened the list from previous versions to make it more inviting. In any event, please keep in mind that I read these books over the course of *decades*. I hope you find *something* that catches your interest. In any event, here are some suggestions—in no particular order—just to get you started:

- a. Xenophon, *The Persian Expedition*, 1972 ed. Yes, I am referring to *that* Xenophon, the Greek guy. This is the granddaddy of expeditionary warfare after-action reports and is still astonishingly relevant. The chapter entitled "Xenophon Justifies Discipline in Emergency" is alone worth the price of admission. I guarantee you won't be sorry if you read this quite lucidly written book.
- b. John Keegan, *The Face of Battle*, 1976. This is widely regarded as one of the finest books on the combat experience ever written. Keegan, perhaps the greatest living military historian, examines several celebrated battles from the perspective of the common soldier. The more you can understand the complicated psychology of combatants, the better ops lawyer you will be. Here's a secret: read this book and you will be able to create fantastic prosecution arguments in barracks-larceny cases. Trust me on that!
- c. Geoffrey Perret, *A Country Made By War*, 1989 ed. For my money, this is the best one-volume military history of the United States. What I like about it is that it doesn't just traipse from battle to battle; it discusses the sociological, economic, and political impact of war on American life.
- d. Guy Sajer, *The Forgotten Soldier*, 1990. First published in 1967, this is the mesmerizing autobiography of a German soldier who served in almost continuous combat for three years on the Eastern Front. This is the story of brutal, total war, fanatically and desperately fought by intractable opponents. An amazing illustration of that which human beings are capable.
- e. Thomas M. Coffey, *Iron Eagle*, 1986. This biography of General Curtis LeMay is another "must read" for every Air Force officer. This often-misunderstood Airman in large measure shaped today's Air Force. That his devotion to strategic airpower helped keep hostile Soviets at bay for two decades of the worst of the Cold War is but one facet of this complicated man. Trivia quiz: who established auto hobby shops on Air Force bases? Read this book!
- f. Colonel Harry G. Summers, Jr., *On Strategy: A Critical Analysis of the Vietnam War*, 1982. This book is by far the most cogent study of what went wrong in the Vietnam conflict. This is not a history: rather, it is the classic Clausewitzian analysis of the war. Read this book, by the way, and you will have a working knowledge of Clausewitz, the most influential theorist in American military thinking. (Summers has also written *On Strategy II* wherein he extends his Clausewitzian analysis to the Gulf War.)
- g. Harold G. Moore & Joseph Galloway, ***We Were Soldiers Once...and Young: Ia Drang The Battle That Changed the War in Vietnam***, 1993. Moor and Galloway present a brilliant and vivid account of the vicious 1965 battle in the Ia-Drang valley in Vietnam. (Among the participants in this battle was Norman Schwarzkopf.) I very much enjoyed this book, but I probably would not have included it but for the fact that it was the most frequently mentioned book about the Vietnam War among those senior officers from whom I solicited recommendations.
- h. Gary D. Solis, *Marines and Military Law in Vietnam: Trial by Fire*, 1989. Somewhat difficult to find, but well worth the effort, this is a rare account about JAGs in Vietnam. The comprehensive book is full of still-relevant lessons of how Marine lawyers coped in an authentic combat environment. An example? These JAGs conducted a court-martial in the near-darkness of an underground dug-out at the height of the siege of Khe Sanh. Put *that* in your computer and e-mail it, wirehead. (What's Khe Sanh, you say? Read Robert Pisor's, *The End of the Line*, 1982).
- i. Daniel P. Bolger, *Americans at War 1975-1986*, 1988. This book is especially important for ops lawyers because it focuses on the "era of violent peace" of the decade-plus reflected in the title. Covering operations such as the Mayaguez recovery, the Iranian hostage rescue attempt, Lebanon, Grenada, and the Gulf of Sidra, it addresses America's "little wars"—exactly the kind that I think JAGs will find themselves in the future. Loaded with charts, spreadsheets, and military terminology, the prospective ops lawyer can learn the lingo at his or her own pace. Master this book, and you're well on your way towards understanding the operator. I think it's more useful than the better known book by Max Boot.
- j. Michael R. Gordon & General Bernard E. Trainor, *The Generals' War*, 1995. This is the most interesting book I know about the *first* Gulf War. Subtitled "The Inside Story of the Conflict in the Gulf," the book lives up to its billing. These guys had fantastic sources and they used them well. This is an exceptional behind-the-

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scenes account of how national security policy is made at the senior level, and how such leaders fight wars—political as well as military. Read this and you can overlook Bob Woodward's *The Commanders*.

k. Tom Clancy, *Fighter Wing*. Although originally published in 1995, it was updated and reissued in 2000. Although even the revised version is getting a bit dated, it really is the best way for the nonexpert to get up to speed on weapons, aircraft, and employment systems of today's Air Force. Notwithstanding the title, it does cover bombers, AWACs, and more. This is one book I will always take on a deployment.

l. Richard Holmes, *Acts of War*, 1985. This book, which nobody seems to have heard of, is subtitled "The Behavior of Men in Battle." I find myself looking to it for all kinds of information. You may not want to read the whole thing, but it makes a good reference.

m. Sidney Axinn, *A Moral Military*, 1989. This is the best book that I've found to answer the thorny moral questions that lie behind the black-letter LOAC law. An easy read that you won't regret.

n. Col Harry J. Maihafer, *Brave Decisions: Moral Courage from the Revolutionary War to Desert Storm*, 1995. What is so interesting about this book is that it relates not just the kind of physical courage required on the battlefield, but the sort of intellectual courage that is needed in the Pentagon and elsewhere. A very easy read and most worthwhile.

o. Michael Ignatieff, *The Warrior's Honor: Ethnic War and the Modern Conscience*, 1997. This is a relatively short (190-page) book that compliments, in a way, Huntington's *Clash of Civilizations*. It provides insight into the "why" of the vicious ethnic conflicts we see today—and offers some ideas as to how to deal with them.

p. Mark Bowden, *Blackhawk Down: A Story of Modern War*, 1999. This book offers a stunning account of the 1993 Ranger raid in Mogadishu, Somalia, that resulted in the deaths of 18 soldiers and hundreds of Somalis. It is a superbly-written and totally absorbing chronicle that puts you in the middle of the most intense firefight involving U.S. troops since the Vietnam War. Extremely well researched, it also has accounts of the battle from the Somali perspective. Some people are calling this the best nonfiction combat account ever written; you will not be able to put this book down.

q. Gary D. Solis, *Son Thang: An American War Crime*, 1997. This book captures the story of a little-known series of trials of Marines in Vietnam charged with shooting 16 unarmed Vietnamese women and children. The author (yes, the same Solis who wrote *Marines and Military Law in Vietnam* discussed above) is a former JAG (now a law professor) who tells the story as lucidly and effectively as any lawyer-turned-novelist. Since the book is aimed at a general readership, it also serves as an easy to understand primer on international law as it relates to war crimes. As a side benefit, the book is an excellent presentation of the practical problems faced by young lawyers attempting to put together a high profile, complicated case in a war zone.

r. Roy Guttman & David Rieff, eds., *Crimes of War: What the Public Should Know*, 1999. A terrific, kind of oddly shaped book loaded with photographs to illustrate various concepts in the law of war and humanitarian law (the book makes a distinction). Using an encyclopedia format, the book is a collection of very cogent and concise entries—some written by journalists—starting with "Act of War" and ending with "Willful Killing." This book covers an amazing range of issues—a perfect way to get introduced to every important concept in this area of the law in a relatively painless way. Exceptionally readable—this book is aided by the inclusion of first-person accounts discussing points raised in recent conflicts.

s. Steven Pressfield, *Gates of Fire: An Epic Novel of the Battle of Thermopylae*, 1998. A book along the lines of *The Killer Angels* but better in my opinion. Here's what David Hackworth says about it: "A must-read by warriors—past, present and future—for within the pages of this magnificent book are the secrets of developing the critical warrior ethic and what combat leadership, discipline, superior training techniques and the Brotherhood of arms are all about." I could not agree more—I am very, very high on this book; it's my all-time historical fiction favorite. Runner-up: Nevil Shute's, *A Town Like Alice*, 1950. If you dismiss this as a romance novel, you lose the chance to enjoy a fantastic story of human courage and perseverance.

t. Tom Clancy, with Chuck Horner, *Every Man a Tiger*, 1999. This is an interesting and, in some ways, troubling book. It gives very good insight into the thinking of the quintessential fighter pilot (not necessarily a compliment in this context). I have met General Horner and he is a much better guy than you might conclude from the book. Still, this is a "must read" for Air Force officers. It's the story of the air

war in the first Gulf war as told by the man who led it. As a result, it contains lots of “inside” stories. I think it is extremely readable (it does have a Clancy flavor), though some civilian reviewers found the jargon a bit bewildering.

u. Wesley K. Clark, *Waging Modern War*, 2001. If you think of Clark not as a one-time presidential candidate, but as a four-star commander in one of the most politicized and complicated wars in history, you’ll enjoy this fascinating book about the war in Kosovo that is sadly under-read. It really illustrates the politics and other factors endemic to modern war-fighting. It also discusses the role of law and lawyers in today’s conflicts.

v. David F. D’Alessandro, *Career Warfare: 10 Rules for Building a Successful Personal Brand and Fighting to Keep It*, 2003. I generally think these kinds of self-improvement books are silly restatements of the obvious. This 216-page volume is not brain surgery, but happens to reflect a lot of my personal philosophy. Tough and no-nonsense. Not pretty!

w. Phillip S. Meilinger, *Airpower: Myths and Facts*, 2003. This is a tiny—but powerful—book. It provides factual answers to common misperceptions about air-



power, including issues about civilian casualties resulting from strategic bombing during World War II. It is only 132 pages and downloadable for free at http://www.maxwell.af.mil/au/aupress/Books/Meilinger_myths/Meilinger_myths_B91.pdf

x. Bill Gilbert, *Airpower: Heroes and Heroism in American Flight Missions 1916 to Today*, 2003. Think of this unheralded volume as the “lite” version of Stephan Budiansky’s book of a similar title that appears on the CSAF’s reading list. It is a relatively short (270-page) unpretentious book that gives you a lot of air power history in an eminently readable way.

y. Douglas C. Waller, *A Question of Loyalty: Gen. Billy Mitchell and the Court-Martial that Grippped the Nation*, 2004. This rendition of the Billy Mitchell court-martial is the best I’ve seen. It is *not* a “celebratory” volume, as it portrays Mitchell—warts and all. Still, it gives you a lot of early airpower history in a format that is exceptionally “accessible” to everyone. What makes it particularly important for the JAG Corps is the discussion of the then-extant military justice system, much of which still resonates today: The case involved the media, Congressional interest, etc., etc. Sound familiar?!?!?

z. Gwynne Dyer, *War: The Lethal Custom*, 2005. This book reminds me of another recommended book, Richard Holmes’ *Acts of War*, in that it delves into the psychology of war. While not really light reading, it is not a turgid academic tome either. It offers a very fascinating look at warfare in human history.

aa. David McCullough, *1776*,* 2005. This is a book that ought to be read by *every* American, so I’d recommend it as a “must have” for your family library. You will find it extremely well written (the author, incidentally, didn’t use a computer in writing it!), not too long, and easy to read. Recommend you put this one at the very top of your to-do list.

bb. Edward Lengel, *General George Washington: A Military Life*,* 2005. I was thrilled to see this one on the Chief’s list. As you may know, there are a number of good new books about Washington and the Revolution, but this is—by far—the very best for military professionals. It was written for general audiences, but is also a bona fide professional biography that includes discussion of Washington’s imperfections. There are many nuggets to mine in it of particular relevance to the JAG Corps (*e.g.*, lots of observations about the role of discipline). Perhaps most important is that it represents Washington as *the* model of the *commitment* that military service demands.

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cc. Benjamin Lambeth, *Air Power Against Terror: America's Conduct of Operation Enduring Freedom*, 2005. This is the only recommendation I have concerning airpower in recent operations. Lambeth presents a very revealing book that lays out many behind-the-scenes issues, and has a relatively robust discussion/critique of the role of JAGs in combat operations. An absolute “must read” for anyone deploying to work in an air operations’ center. It’s actually available free if you want to download a 456-page book (may also be free to USAF people—check with RAND). See <http://www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/MG166>.

dd. George Packer, *The Assassins' Gate: America in Iraq*, 2005. This is another book in the “only recommendation” category (despite scores of books about Iraq). A controversial yet intriguing look at the U.S. involvement in Iraq. Though military operations are discussed, the focus is really on the strategic level.

ee. Andrew Bacevich, *The New American Militarism: How Americans Are Seduced by War*, 2005. This one offers a very original, if occasionally histrionic, look at contemporary civil-military relations by a respected retired Army combat vet turned university professor who is, despite the suggestion of the title of his book, no pacifist. My recommendation would be to read the 23-page appendix on “The Theory of Civilian Control” in Eliot Cohen’s very fine book *Supreme Command: Soldiers, Statesmen, and Leadership in Wartime* before engaging Bacevich’s controversial effort (which is only 288 pages). Civil-military relations are frequently misunderstood, and it is often JAG

Corps people who need to set the record straight as to the legal architecture. The Bacevich book will help you connect a lot of dots, even if you find you differ with some of it.

That’s the “short” list! Again, *don’t think you have to read everything*. I was really just trying to make sure I offered you plenty of options. Of course, no list would be complete without mention of the JAG Corps’s *I LEAD!*—a superb volume that we all must read.

Too busy to read? Well, re-order your priorities because it really is important. Many of these books are available in paperback so you can carry one with you to utilize those spare moments waiting for a meeting or a flight. Here’s another tip: I know that *1776* and the *Washington* book are available—unabridged—on audio CDs. (Check your base and local libraries.) In fact, I listened to them myself while running; you might wish to listen to them as you work out or commute. (By the way, *1776* is read by the author—something that is not always the best idea, but works extremely well with this book.) It isn’t easy, but you can—and *must*—find the time.

Anyway, in the strongest terms I recommend that you begin your own reading program. The JAG Corps must be ready to provide not only world-class legal service, but all-aspect counselorship on any subject. The methodologies of legal thinking, and mastery of the forensic arts, are “weapons” that we can lock onto any target your commander selects, *but you must build the intellectual infrastructure to be ready to do so*. Reading is a vital part of that process, so get started soonest. Good luck and good reading!

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