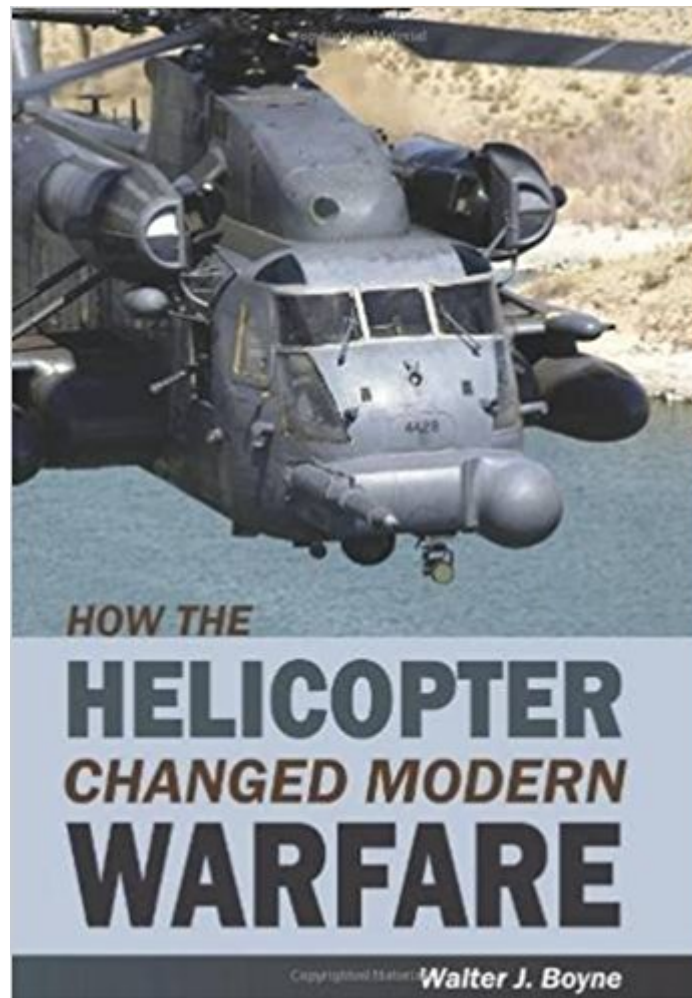




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How The Helicopter Changed Modern Warfare



Synopsis

The helicopter was introduced to warfare during World War II. Since then, it has had a profound effect at both the tactical and strategic levels. This in-depth book by a military aviation expert examines the growth of the helicopter's importance in warfare and argues convincingly that severe flaws in the military procurement process have led to U.S. troops using antiquated helicopter designs in combat despite billions spent on research and development.

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Customer Reviews

Read this book. Boyne constructs a fast-paced narrative that begins with the first uses of helicopters in warfare and for lifesaving missions. If the book has a flaw, it is too brief. --Proceedings of U.S. Naval Institute

The recent wonderful mission in which our Navy Seals killed the world's leading terrorist, Osama bin Laden, illustrates perfectly the three thrusts of this book. The first thrust is to honor not only the combat crews that fly the helicopters but their equally important ground crews. The second thrust is to show that helicopters have become the point of America's sword, being used for missions that could otherwise never be accomplished. The third thrust is that, sad it is, the United States, the richest country in the world, is sending its combat troops into battle in helicopters whose basic design dates back to the 1970s and 1980s. The crash of the modified Black Hawk in Osama's compound illustrates the risk involved in using ancient equipment. We have fifth generation jet fighters with stand-off weapons, but are fighting at close quarters with first and second generation

jet helicopters.Â Â My books points out the terrible R&D and Procurement problems of the services and suggests a Skunk Works approach to solving the difficulties and getting new combat helicopters into the field.

I'm like a lot of military aviation enthusiasts: relatively knowledgeable when it comes to fixed-wing aircraft but virtually clueless on the subject of helicopters. Well, I can tell you this book changed that--I've still got a lot to learn about helicopters but I'm no longer a complete ignoramus. On the advice of a friend, I picked up a copy of the book from . Since I already own several books by Col. Boyne, I was somewhat curious why he--a career USAF fixed-wing airplane driver--would write a book about helicopters. But what I forgot about him is that, besides being a professional pilot, he's one of the most deeply learned men on the subject of U.S. military aviation today (don't take my word for it--look at his personal bibliography). Most of the books on helicopters, at least the ones I know about, are primarily "equipment" books which report technical specifications, development history, production data, operational use, etc. While those books are useful, Col. Boyne takes the topic to a new level. In substantive content, the book is both historical and editorial. The author explains development of the earliest helicopters, not as one invention like the airplane, but a series of inventions over several decades by many men, some of them certified geniuses like Igor Sikorsky, Anton Flettner, and Frank Piasecki, and how they eventually turned their designs into controllable and practical flying machines. A majority of the book's historical analysis focuses upon the gradual but steady development of the helicopter's military potential. I found it interesting that the author described the "The First Helicopter War" as taking place in Algeria in the late 1950s, not in Vietnam as I thought. But he does cover Vietnam in substantial detail, in particular the integration of the U.S. Army's "Airmobile" concept of using troop carrying assault helicopters to achieve "Vertical Envelopment" of the enemy. He includes a section on the parallel development of military helicopters by the Soviet Union, which provides a very interesting comparison of methods and technologies. As the author moves into the post-Vietnam period, his analysis of military helicopter development becomes more incisive and starts to build his chief thesis, to-wit: that U. S. Dept. of Defense procurement programs have sadly neglected helicopter research and development while other types of military aircraft--fighters, bombers, attack aircraft, and even transports--have undergone technological quantum leaps in the same timeframe. This was a real wakeup call for me--something I wasn't aware of until Col. Boyne pointed it out. Fighters, for example, are now in their fifth generation of development since the 1940s, same for bombers; helicopters, on the other hand, are scarcely beyond their second. He does cite the tilt-rotor Bell-Boeing MV-22 as a partial

exception to this, which, after a 15-year gestation period, has turned out to be a very expensive alternative that doesn't exactly duplicate the mission of helicopters. In the final chapter, "The Helicopter Today and Tomorrow," Col. Boyne conclusively proves his thesis. Other than the MV-22, no new type of helicopter has been developed for the U.S. military since the Hughes (now Boeing) AH-64 was originally procured in the mid-1980s. Ironically, the technology needed to move military helicopters into the next generation already exists, but as Col. Boyne indicates, helicopter R&D hasn't moved forward to take advantage of it. The book also includes two helpful appendices: the first on the helicopter concepts from earliest times up to their initial practical development in the 1930s and the second providing specifications and data, in alphabetical order, of various types of military helicopters produced since World War II. If you're helicopter-challenged like me and would really like to understand them--past, present, and future--you'll buy this book and read it. HIGHLY RECOMMENDED.

I gave "How the Helicopter Changed Modern Warfare" three stars because I liked it, but there was a great deal of repetition. He tells you what he's going to tell you, he tells you again what he's going to tell you, he tells you (at least once) and then he tells you what he told you. What he tells you is that helicopter design stagnated shortly after Vietnam - the other information, which is very good, is all meant to support that thesis and (to a degree) explain why it happened (or didn't happen). In other words, title does not quite match contents, though the contents are interesting and informative.

This was an incredible book that pulled no punches. Yes, there are those who might take umbrage with some of his very valid points. It was a very educational read and a very sobering one. I will never look at helicopters again in the same light. It is a must read for any pilot of a helicopter and any student of military history or aviation history. I just ordered two more copies.

Probably unique in its treatment of the subject. Boyne does it again! He covers the international scene of helicopter design and manufacture.

A fascinating and informative read! The helicopter has evolved into the tip of the sword in modern ground warfare, and an instrument that has saved thousands of lives. And, it has accomplished things impossible for fixed wing aircraft. Colonel Walter J. Boyne (Ret.) has succeeded in providing the first succinct analysis of the impact of helicopters on modern warfare. Endnotes and his background as a military pilot and a published author of three dozen books on military aviation

provides additional credibility. Thankfully, the author provides a short history of autogiro, and helicopter designs in an appendix, thus allowing the reader to jump right into the crux of the story of, the helicopter in modern warfare. Boyne throws down the gauntlet early in the book when he says that the helicopter as a weapon of war has been, and continues to be neglected until we become involved in a war, and then we ramp up technology research and funding. He cites doctrinal differences, budgets, attitudes, and procurement policies as reasons for its neglect. He cites numerous examples such as the underfunding of helicopter development until 1961, and the "self-inflicted wound" of the Vietnam War. Citing early horrific helicopter personnel losses, almost 44 percent compared to some of the highest casualties in the European air theater approaching 20 percent during the 1943 Schweinfurt/Regensburg campaigns, he states the commanders in World War II recognized the need for a change in strategy and tactics, and employed bomber escorts. Since there was no alternative to the helicopter the political "commanders" of the Vietnam War refused to change tactics and developed the attitude "take the losses, and keep on fighting." The corollary of "keep on fighting" was a gradual learning curve, and by the spring of 1971, helicopter warfare had taken giant leaps forward in spite of a skillful and well-armed enemy backed by the Soviets and China. With a combination of armed helicopters, aerial rocket artillery, and fixed wing support (in good weather) helicopter warfare took on a new dimension. As Boyne points out, in Operation LAMSON there were 168,000 helicopter sorties where the loss rate was one-quarter of a percent. While that may seem relatively low, 106 helicopters were destroyed and another 618 damaged. Worse, of the helicopter crews, 68 were killed, 42 missing and 818 wounded. Boyne provides detailed coverage of the Vietnam war but also addresses the politics of various administrations and in some cases the narrow view and weak leadership that arose on and off during the 40 years that followed the Vietnam War. Boyne says that the current helicopter design is still outdated by 30 to 40 years which still leads to an unacceptable number of casualties. There is no shortage of statistics and Boyne presents cogent arguments to support his assertions. I'd recommend this book to all veterans, especially Vietnam vets, armchair aviators, and every patriotic American.

First and foremost, the shipping speed was amazing. I don't believe I have ever received a package so quickly! Although a gift that hasn't been given yet, browsing through it, I know that my Aerospace engineer husband will love it :) I have only read a few pages, but it is written in a way where someone with no interest in helicopters (like myself) keeps reading!

For all fixed wing enthusiasts, Mathis book belongs on the coffee table. Almost nothing is left out. Once through the book is not enough. Very enjoyable.

Very insightful. This book is the definitive history on the use of helicopters in war. A must read for an war planner.

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