

gency planning. This doctrine forces us to plan for failures in the primary operational plan. The operations studied are conspicuous in having only one plan.

Perilous Options is well-written and makes an excellent read. It is recommended to national security leaders and military professionals as a first exposure to strategic operations; however, additional readings are necessary to give the reader a full appreciation of planning, risk assessment and lessons learned from these courageous undertakings.

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The Commandos: The Inside Story of America's Secret Soldiers. By Douglas C. Waller. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1994. ISBN: 0-671-78717-9. 399 pages. \$23.

I was fully prepared to dislike this book, being immediately suspicious of works which claim to be the "inside story," especially when written by a journalist and outsider like Douglas Waller. But as I read, I found myself being won over.

Shortly after the Gulf War, Waller wrote a cover article for *Newsweek* on America's special-operations forces. His research for that article was, apparently, the genesis of this work. Through personal interviews with numerous members of America's special-operations community, Waller crafts a book that tells some very credible stories.

Waller provides chapters examining not only Gulf War special operations, but also the early training and education of the soldiers, sailors and airmen who performed those operations. In fact, this is one of the strengths of the book.

The author personally followed Special Forces soldiers in training

through exercise Robin Sage — the final stage of SF training. He tells the story of the Navy SEALs' "Hell Week" in its entirety as seen through the eyes of one boat crew. He also rides with an Air Force CH-53 Pave Low helicopter crew as they train for low-level, night and pinpoint insertions and exfiltrations.

Determining the veracity of these stories is perhaps the first duty of the reviewer. I sought out some of those whose exploits in training and war are detailed in Waller's chapters. To date, they all agree

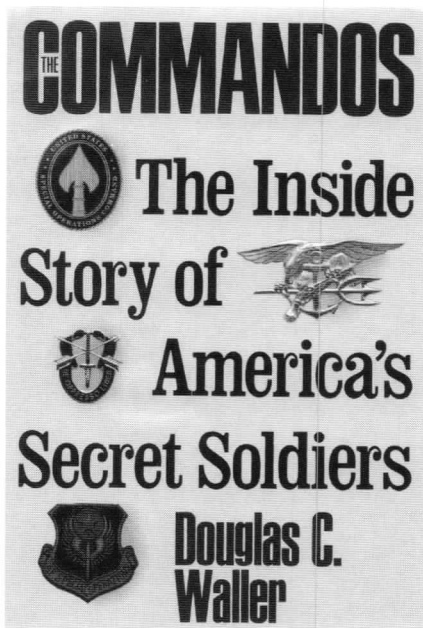
compromised recon missions, subsequent firefights and hot exfiltrations from deep within Iraqi territory; Navy Lieutenant Tom Dietz's SEAL Team's deception of Mina Saud, which assisted in deceiving the Iraqis that a Marine amphibious assault was planned on the beaches of Kuwait; the Joint Special Operations Command's search for SCUDs in the western Iraqi desert and even a story about psychological operations — an absolutely critical, if often overlooked, capability.

Perhaps the author overreaches himself with his discussion of Gen. Carl Stiner's supposedly poorly crafted attempts to have SOF play a larger role in the Gulf War. Also of unknown veracity is Gen. Norman Schwarzkopf's distrust of elite forces — although this perception is widely held to be factual in the SOF community. These things might be true, but the author provides little in the way of supporting evidence.

Overall, *Commandos* is readable, reasonably accurate and entertaining. Given the author's profession, it is understandable that it is written in journalistic style without footnotes, but for that reason, it is not recommended as a primary reference book for scholars.

Finally, and especially for those unfamiliar with the SOF community, the book provides a number of potentially informative insights into SOF — the target audience of *Commandos* is obviously "them" and not "us." The determination of whether or not this constitutes "the inside story" is up to the reader.

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that, although the author missed some facts at the margins, the book as a whole is remarkably accurate.

In addition to SOF training, Waller details some of the Gulf War's better-known special-operations missions. These include Lt. Col. (now Col.) Rich Comer's 20th Special Operations Squadron joint mission to destroy two key Iraqi radar installations with Army Apache helicopters — this mission is generally thought of as the first planned combat action of Desert Storm.

Also included are CWO Chad Balvanz's and MSgt. Jeff Sim's