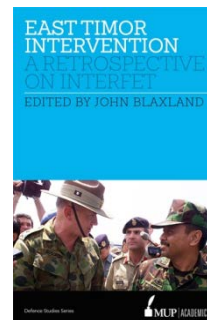


## Book reviews

### ***East Timor Intervention: a retrospective on INTERFET***

John Blaxland (ed.)  
Melbourne University Press: Melbourne, 2015, 328 pages  
ISBN: 978-0-5228-6776-3  
\$59.99



**Reviewed by Dr Stephanie Koorey, Deakin University**

Evolving out of a collaboration between Military History and Heritage Victoria and the Australian National University, this engaging collection of essays covers the build-up to the crisis in East Timor, and the response in 1999 in the form of INTERFET (International Intervention Force East Timor).

INTERFET was an international, Australian-led coalition into the small island of East Timor, then part of Indonesia. Following escalating Indonesian violence after an overwhelming referendum for independence in September 1999, Australia was tasked by the UN to work with Indonesia and Portugal, the former colonial power of East Timor, to deploy a peacekeeping force into the half-island. INTERFET was the second of three sequential UN-mandated missions, each with different mandates.

INTERFET was a small but significant slice of Australian and Asia-Pacific history. It was not the largest Australian-led intervention. Australia had led the UN intervention into Cambodia earlier that decade. As General Sir Peter Cosgrove points out in his chapter, INTERFET 'was the first time that in such a large force the commander, the major headquarters, the majority of the troops and the overwhelming preponderance of the logistic assets were Australian'. Former Prime Minister John Howard echoes this point, stating in his foreword that by 1999, INTERFET 'was the most decisive demonstration of Australian capacity and influence in our region since World War Two'.

The great strengths of this work are in the big voices behind the contributions, the international diversity of the contributions, and the strategic, operational and tactical insights they all bring. The book is also engagingly well-written, and each chapter is easy to become absorbed in.

The calibre of the contributions is clear in the roll call of contributors who were involved in INTERFET. In addition to Prime Minister Howard and commander Cosgrove, there are contributions by Australian and international senior military officers, as well as operational commanders and officers, who each contribute their own compelling experiences and perspectives. The vital role of the Australian Federal Police (AFP) is given voice through a chapter by Federal Agent Marty Hess. While Blaxland gives a comprehensive acknowledgement of the literature on the East Timor intervention, until Hess's chapter, the role of the AFP has often been overlooked, only previously and vividly portrayed by the compelling ABC television film 'Answered by Fire'.

During a visit to the Indonesian Defence Force Headquarters in Jakarta in 2009, this reviewer was fortunate in being able to pause and reflect at the Seroja Memorial to the Indonesian military, police and civilians killed in East Timor while it was part of Indonesia. Having grown up with an Australian perspective on the Indonesian occupation of East Timor, and previously written on the East Timorese armed struggle, this was a sobering and educational experience. The chapter from martial law and military commander Major General Kiki Syahnakri brings this often overlooked Indonesian military perspective into light.

While compiling a single work from numerous contributors brings its own challenges, this work suffers from very few incoherencies or inconsistencies. It also acknowledges up front that there were numerous others involved in East Timor at the time, particularly the non-government and international organizations, as well as many others from the 21 contributing countries. Importantly, this book

acknowledges at the outset that at the political and military levels, INTERFET placed a huge strain on the Australia-Indonesia relationship.

The book largely celebrates INTERFET as a successful mission. Indeed, chapter contributor Bob Breen has previously branded INTERFET as 'Mission Accomplished'. After its quarter of a century of armed and political struggle, East Timor did achieve liberation—and INTERFET was also very low on coalition battle-casualties. Further, Damien Kingsbury draws the conclusion that six years before the adoption of the 'Responsibility to Protect' by the international community in 2005, INTERFET can be seen as the 'first explicit example' of where its core principles, and obligations to respond, can be retrospectively tested.

While not all works can be all things to all people, this book could have had a stronger East Timorese perspective. There are two chapters devoted to East Timorese perspectives of the intervention: one co-authored by East Timorese students at the Australian National University (who do not appear to have been given papers to either conference from which the other contributions came), and one from former East Timorese military and political leader Xanana Gusmao.

However, the Timorese civilian and security sector perspective could have been given more prominence. This is especially so as there is now an East Timorese military officer cohort keen to engage with Australia and the region. As Hess reminds the reader in his chapter's conclusion, '[t]he cost [of the referendum ballot] for the East Timorese people was very high, in terms of post-ballot casualties, and it is they who should be the ultimate arbiters of whether the sacrifice involved in conducting the ballot was worth it or not'.

In his final chapter, Blaxland reminds the reader of how the winning triumvirate of Gusmao, Cosgrove and Syahnakri are 'emblematic' of the enduring positive relationships between East Timor, Australia and Indonesia. But he also cautions how easily the intervention could have spiralled out of control. This must be an equally-enduring memory.

The only apparent inconsistency is in the spelling of the acronym for the East Timorese liberation army: Forças Armadas De Libertação Nacional de Timor Leste (Armed Forces for the National Liberation of East Timor). In some chapters it is FALINTIL, in others it is FALANTIL. The more common is the former, although it is a particularly Australian predilection to use the latter.

All up, this book has done an excellent job of capturing and presenting the thoughts and experiences of many senior people involved in INTERFET. It should be a useful companion for scholars, those interested in Australian foreign policy and military history, and the general reader alike.

## ***Hunter Killer: inside the lethal world of drone warfare***

T. Mark McCurley, with Kevin Maurer  
Allen & Unwin: Sydney, 2016, 368 pages  
ISBN: 978-1-7602-9217-1  
\$32.99



### **Reviewed by Air Commodore Mark Lax, OAM, CSM (Retd)**

Most observers of the evening news bulletins will have seen the effects of an air strike on a terrorist compound or training camp. The imagery is captivating if not voyeuristic. The author of this work calls it 'Pred Porn'. More than in the past, such strikes are often carried out by remotely-piloted aircraft (RPA). With the wars in Afghanistan, Iraq, Yemen and Syria requiring an increased demand for intelligence, surveillance and firepower without the risk to aircrew, one answer is the Predator. This book is about one such RPA, the MQ-1 Predator, a deadly machine that has been on operations in that theatre for over a decade.

While dozens of books have been written about the exploits of the SAS, Delta Force, commandos, snipers, US Marines and the like, little has been written about the air war and the contribution air makes to the joint fight. It is the mostly unseen air war that has had a profound effect on and shaped modern combat operations. Every ground sub-unit now has access to direct-feed video of their surroundings provided by airborne sensors, and every sub-unit can now call in a Predator strike to rescue them from a sticky situation. Knowing how this is done and the safeguards in place makes this book important reading for all members of the profession of arms.

Despite years of trying to convince the media that RPAs are not mindless drones, the term 'drone' persists. However, these aircraft are anything but mindless. Each requires a sophisticated ground control centre which hosts a pilot and sensor operator, a secure communications system between aircraft and controller and between controller, and the Joint Operations Centre. It is the sensor operator who finds and locks on to the target. It is the JOC that gives the order to fire a Hellfire missile, after higher level clearance, and the JOC that decides mission, target and monitors rules of engagement. This complex system involves hundreds of people. Through this book we learn that the in-theatre crew prepare, maintain, launch and recover the Predator but the mission flying is done from a base in New Mexico. All commanded and controlled through secure satellite links.

To be cleared to operate the Predator, a pilot and sensor operator must undergo an intensive training course, regular flight assessments and, finally, pass a strenuous qualification test before being posted to a Predator squadron. Flying is done in shifts, with the Predator airborne for up to 24 hours or more, so the crews get eight hours on station before relief. This book tells the story of the training, the missions and how the Predator is flown and indeed fought in a readable and easily understood format unlike much previously available to the general public.

The author is experienced Predator pilot, US Air Force Lieutenant Colonel T. Mark McCurley, who tells the story as part biographic, part operational discourse. He also tells of the ridiculous demands on the Predator squadron and how inter-Service rivalry in the US forces is still rife. At one point, he complains that Predators get blamed for every combat error even when not tasked. McCurley describes the problems he faced in taking command of a Predator squadron which had low morale and used sloppy procedures. He explains how he turned the unit around.

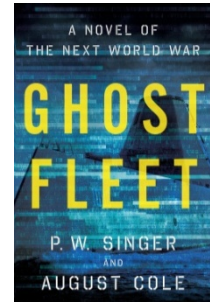
Interestingly, given the American obsession with mission secrecy, McCurley specifically covers in detail the Predator stalking of three significant terrorist targets—the American-born terrorist Anwar Al-Awlaki, Abu Musab al-Zarqawi and one he calls 'the Facilitator'. While they got Al-Awlaki and the Facilitator, a simple mistake allowed Zarqawi to escape. It is a riveting story.

Fortunately for the general reader, McCurley had the foresight to seek the help of a professional journalist, Kevin Maurer, to assist in removing the military jargon, acronyms and, critically for the success of the book, to add a level of suspense to the narrative. As such, the book reads much more like a Tom Clancy novel than an operator's manual and it is a great read. The chase to catch Anwar al-Awlaki across Yemen in 2011 is one such example. This makes it appealing to a much wider audience than otherwise might be expected.

I rate this 'highly recommended' for all professional military officers, those generally interested in the counter-terrorism war, the air war of the future, and for the Chief of Air Force's reading list for 2016.

## ***Ghost Fleet: a novel of the next world war***

P.W. Singer and August Cole  
Houghton Mifflin Harcourt: New York, 2015, 404 pages  
ISBN: 978-0-5441-4284-8  
US\$28.00



**Reviewed by Wing Commander Jo Brick, Royal Australian Air Force**

In 2005, Brian Nichiporuk published a report to guide US Army force structure planning, using ‘alternative futures’ methodology. The report used five development variables—geopolitics, economics, demographics, technology, and the environment—as a foundation for building six plausible versions of the security environment for the future.

These six ‘alternative futures’ were used as the compelling narrative to assist US Army planners in constructing six alternative force structures. The study is a useful demonstration of how imagining the future can provide guidance about the security environment that military forces are likely to face, and whether existing or planned capabilities are up to the task.

In *Ghost Fleet*, P.W. Singer, author of *Wired for War*, and August Cole, Director of the Art of Future War project at the Atlantic Council, deliver a scenario involving war between China and the US. The new Chinese government—a technocratic diarchy between business and the military, called ‘The Directorate’—attacks and seizes Hawaii after the Chinese discover a source of gas in the Mariana Trench.

The story is told through a number of characters, including the captain of a US Navy ship, the USS Zumwalt; a female ‘hunter’ exacting revenge on the Chinese occupiers of Oahu; a band of insurgents; and a Branson-esque entrepreneur and inventor who offers one side a technological advantage as a means to restore peace. Through these characters, Singer and Cole write a detailed narrative of what a future war would look like. It is one involving the destruction of space-based systems, cyber warfare and unmanned systems, which coalesce with societal changes such as the ready use of ‘stims’ to boost human performance and the use of ‘viz’ (similar to Google Glass) technology as a means of managing information, education and training.

These technologies are current or are viable developments for the near future, and the story demonstrates how they may be used in a war between global hegemonies. For military forces such as the ADF, which invest heavily in the latest high-technology weapon systems, the more sobering parts of the story involve the exploitation of the vulnerabilities of such systems and the ensuing powerlessness of such forces.

One salient example involves the downing of a F-35 after its microprocessors, which had been hacked with malicious code at the point of manufacture many months previously, are used as a homing signal for Chinese air-to-air missiles. This example also highlights the reality of military capability acquisition and sustainment: that the development, manufacture and sustainment of high-technology weapon systems relies heavily on partnerships between governments and corporations, and that the seams of this relationship can be exploited by nefarious actors.

An interesting aspect of Singer and Cole’s account is the story surrounding the insurgency against the Chinese occupation force in the Hawaii Special Administrative Zone. This story arc is perhaps the authors’ way of pointing out that we may have all the technology in the world but it will take more than technology to defeat a determined resistance movement. Further, this aspect of the story also identifies insurgencies as a type of conflict that will continue into the future. This is expected, given the prevalence of this type of conflict over that between states throughout history.

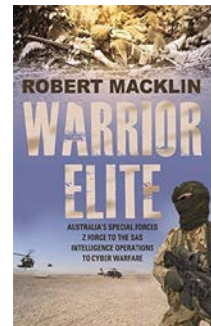
The focus on technology in *Ghost Fleet* is not surprising, given the depth of expertise of the authors in the field of future weapons and warfare. The detailed bibliography at the back of the book demonstrates the depth of research that forms the foundation of the book. However, the human element remains an important aspect of the nature of war and the only criticism to make about this story is the undue

emphasis on weapons technology over a deeper incorporation of the human aspects of the narrative. As Patton once commented, '[w]ars may be fought with weapons, but they are won by men'.

*Ghost Fleet* is a thoroughly enjoyable and insightful story that also provides us with plausible scenarios that highlight the vulnerabilities of high-technology military forces. For this reason, it is of direct relevance to the ADF, as each Service brings future concepts, such as the fifth-generation Air Force, to fruition.

## ***Warrior Elite: Australia's Special Forces Z Force to the SAS, intelligence operations to cyber warfare***

Robert Macklin  
Hachette: Sydney, 2015, 400 pages  
ISBN: 978-0-7336-3291-4  
\$35



### **Reviewed by Jim Truscott**

This book is the broadest history of Australian Special Operations that has ever been published and, as such, it draws a line in the sand for histories to come. Special Operations are essentially any government activity that requires clandestine measures—and the book traces their evolution from World War 2 until the present day.

Uniquely and arguably correctly, it brands the Australian Secret Intelligence Service (ASIS) and the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation (ASIO) as 'Special Forces'. It also poses a prognosis for the future with the contention that Special Forces units in this widest sense across government are the future for security preparedness. It is almost as if the 'Big Army' will be there just to train Special Forces!

Most of the history is not new but it is a compilation in a way that has not been done before. At times, it is a colloquial history and, indeed, the account starts notably with the 2/2 Independent Company's refusal of an order to surrender in Timor, along with other operations in Timor, PNG and the Northern Territory by Special Operations Australia, including the so-called 'Nackeroos' (the North Australia Observation Unit) and the other independent companies. In hindsight, the fact that the Australian Special Operations capability was almost completely dismantled at the end of World War 2 was really quite amazing.

The history moves on to the establishment of the Commandos, SAS, ASIO, ASIS and the Defence Signals Directorate (DSD). It recounts spy scandals, jungle patrols and ambushes in Borneo, where Australia developed a pedigree in jungle and covert warfare, and five years of patrolling and helicopter operations in Vietnam. It describes targeting with electronic warfare support and how SAS sometimes provided plausible cover for electronic warfare activities. There are early relationships with US Special Forces and it accurately describes the arguments over the use of SAS in reconnaissance and direct action.

There is the period of the long military peace from 1971 until 1999, with a focus on ASIO and ASIS mandarins and the Canberra bureaucracy, the two Royal Commissions on Intelligence and Security, ASIS successes and failures in Indonesia, Chile, East Timor and Cambodia, the development of the counter terrorist capability and the growth of DSD. The account is made interesting by stories about the Sheraton hotel debacle, Soviet spies in Canberra, and economic intelligence gathering by ASIS in support of Australian business. There are a few minor inaccuracies but such is the difficulty of compiling a huge secret history like this. It is not an official history and maybe there will never be one.

The book describes the formation of Headquarters Special Forces and Headquarters 1<sup>st</sup> Commando Regiment to support the counter terrorism capability, the re-rolling of 4RAR as a commando unit, the Blackhawk helicopter disaster, growth in the Australian satellite system, and the involvement of DSD and

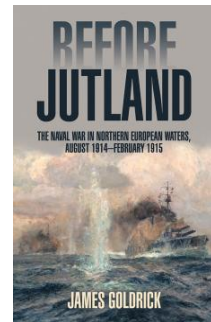
the Defence Imagery and Geospatial Organisation in operations in the Middle East, East Timor, the Sydney Olympics and the Tampa refugee crisis.

There is yet another inquiry into ASIS, more operations again in Afghanistan and Iraq, the convergence of Special Forces activities in East Timor and Afghanistan, the direct support of the Australian Signal Directorate (formally DSD) to SAS and Commandos in Afghanistan, and cyberwarfare against Chinese operations. The book concludes with counter-people smuggling, other homeland, border security and ongoing cyber operations.

By the necessity of government secrecy, a book like this can never reveal the complete history, and so it is a veritable potted history laced with human interest stories, making it very readable. The book finishes with the prediction of even more convergence of the pillars of Special Forces. While some may find this book off-putting or threatening, it should be mandatory reading for senior ADF officers, as well as those in other Government departments responsible for planning and executing Special Operations. One outcome is certain. The jihadists, people smugglers and Chinese cyber agencies will have already read it!

***Before Jutland:  
the naval war in northern European waters,  
August 1914 - February 1915***

James Goldrick  
Naval Institute Press: Annapolis, 2015, 382 pages  
ISBN: 978-1-5911-4349-9  
US\$44.95



**Reviewed by Commander Robert Woodham, RAN**

From a maritime perspective, the ‘Great War’ was pretty simple: the Royal Navy enforced a blockade, which turned the screws on the Germans in the war of attrition on land sufficiently that the German army eventually fell apart from within. There was an inconclusive action at Jutland—‘an assault on the gaoler, followed by a return to gaol’—which didn’t change anything, and oh, the German submarines made things a bit dicey. That’s about it, right?

In this fascinating and authoritative book, James Goldrick shows us that there is much more to the war at sea than this. He describes the ships, introduces the personalities, explains the technologies and sets the political context for maritime operations at the start of the Great War. Or the lack of war, since—although the British, Germans and Russians had spent a great deal of time and money in acquiring impressive battle fleets—they were then reticent about exposing them to risk.

The Royal Navy held back from a close blockade of Germany, basing the newly-named Grand Fleet in the Orkney Islands’ anchorage at Scapa Flow, while the Germans were even more timid in husbanding their naval strength. Like a chess-player who is down on his pieces, the Germans believed that losses could only be contemplated in situations where they could be certain that the Royal Navy would lose more.

It seems odd that the British, having spent enormous sums in building a large, modern battle fleet, then hid it away at a remote Scottish island as soon as hostilities began. The explanation is that the capital ships could not be provided with guaranteed protection from torpedo boats, and later on from submarines, either at sea or, perhaps more surprisingly, in their home ports. The basic concepts and practicalities of using screening ships in a coordinated manner with battleships had not been fully developed, much less practised to the minimum level of competence required in wartime. As the author notes ruefully, both sides suffered from this shortcoming, and would have to learn as they went along.

It is surprising, given that the Royal Navy had enjoyed a century of ‘Pax Britannica’ in which to prepare for a major war that everyone had seen coming, that in some respects they were unprepared when it

arrived. The book discusses problems with propulsion and hull design, the want of training, the lack of secure bases, and inexpert command and control. The Germans also struggled with problems which one might consider foreseeable, such as being unable to obtain high-quality steaming coal from Wales, as they did before the war, and finding the quality of their own coal lacking. There are lessons here for us all.

The submarine started the war as something of an unknown capability but soon proved that, handled well, it could be a serious threat. Early attitudes to this submarine threat by the Royal Navy were sometimes naïve, with tragic consequences. For example, the book recounts the sinking of three Royal Navy cruisers, HM Ships *Cressy*, *Aboukir* and *Hogue*, which were obligingly steaming at slow speed, and without zigzagging, when the first of them, *Aboukir*, was attacked by the German submarine U9. When HMS *Hogue* stopped in the water to pick up survivors, she too was torpedoed and sunk. This did not deter *Cressy* from reducing speed to dead slow in order to pick up survivors of the previous two attacks and, by this stage one would have thought predictably, taking her turn to be torpedoed and sunk too.

Other new technologies brought their own uncertainties. The fledgling air arms, including the use of airships by the Germans, probably did not contribute much at this early stage of the war. As the author points out, 'most aviators, whether in fixed wing or lighter-than-air machines, were doing well if they managed to take off and land safely, let alone conduct a mission'.

Radio communication was in its infancy, yet clearly played an important part, although it was not the technology itself which provided challenges but rather the manner of its employment. Even simple matters, such as providing unambiguous geographical positions in contact reports, were not always thought through, and generated confusion at times.

A further fascinating thread to the story is that, in late October 1914, the Royal Navy gained the ability to break German codes. This was achieved through the capture of a complete set of code books from three locations, namely the North Sea, by the Russians from the German cruiser *Magdeburg* in the Baltic, and also by the RAN. The Royal Navy also made effective use of direction finding and traffic analysis, even when the actual messages could not be decrypted.

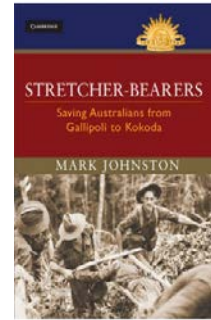
There is a lot of detail in this book, including thorough descriptions of the various naval actions which took place, including German raids on England's east coast, the battle of the Dogger Bank, numerous minor actions and skirmishes in the North Sea, and the generally-successful mining operations by the Russians in the Baltic. But a great strength of the book is the attention which James Goldrick also gives to various broader themes: command and control, operational art, and social pressures arising from social change as well as from the personalities involved. And there are certainly some big personalities in this story, including Winston Churchill as First Lord of the Admiralty, and Admiral Jackie Fisher as First Sea Lord.

This book has many attractions, not least of which is the fluent and compelling writing style. I found it an absolute joy to read. I expect to re-read it before long, suspecting that I may have missed many a gem in the text, not through any opacity of expression but simply because there is so much information to assimilate. The book is well presented, with photographs of the principal characters and ships, and provided with a comprehensive index, notes and bibliography.

This book is informative, engaging and thought-provoking, and certainly achieves its aim to be a definitive study of the war at sea in northern European waters up to 1915. Given that this is the scope of the book, may we hope for sequels? I thoroughly recommend it to the *ADF Journal's* readers.

## ***Stretcher-Bearers: saving Australians from Gallipoli to Kokoda***

Mark Johnston  
Cambridge University Press: Port Melbourne, 2014,  
ISBN: 978-1-1070-8719-4  
\$59.95



### **Reviewed by Captain Ryan Blignaut, Australian Army**

The cry 'Stretcher-Bearer!' has resonated on the cliffs of the Gallipoli peninsula and echoed through the jungles of Kokoda. Very few 21<sup>st</sup> century soldiers would argue the vital importance of medical intervention on the front line. But this indulgence was not always shared by the men of the Australian Imperial Force. It was only through valour and perseverance that the men emblazoned with an 'SB' brassard earned the respect and admiration that we have come to know today. It is the legacy of the 'body-snatchers' that author Mark Johnson has endeavoured to capture in his chronological and pictorial account, *Stretcher Bearers*.

The book befittingly and beautifully launches with a detailed description of a 'Mark II' ambulance stretcher. This elucidation of the most basic of medical hardware enforces the theme, 'I was only doing my job'. One of the most interesting aspects of the book is certainly the early opinion that stretcher-bearers should be chosen from the weak or from those who might be 'anti-violence' inclined. However, these men proved themselves to be capable and courageous, as iterated by General Sir Ian Hamilton when speaking on the events of the Gallipoli campaign, saying 'No braver corps [Medical Corps] existed, and I believe the reason to be that all thought of self is instinctively flung aside when the saving of others is the motive'.

The contrasting duality of purpose between the service of war and the service of humanity forms the essence of heroic tales and stoicism beyond comprehension. The book uses photographs to illustrate this duality, depicting the mortality of the men while compassionately carrying out their duties. The majority of the book contains the aforementioned photographs accompanied by short narratives on their origin, location and history (where available). These images cover several World War I and II theatres, including Gallipoli, Palestine, the Western Front, Middle East and the jungle campaigns.

The book concludes as poignantly as it begins by providing a biopic of Private George Fowler, a 22-year-old stretcher-bearer, Military Medal recipient, husband and father. His citation read, 'continued with ceaseless energy to attend and to carry wounded to the dressing station despite heavy sniping and artillery fire from the enemy. By his unselfish devotion to duty he was instrumental in the saving of life and his cool and gallant bearing set an example to all'. Private Fowler was sadly killed by artillery fire in his Battalion's last fight in Australia's final week of fighting in World War I. Set against the backdrop of his youthful photograph, it not only delivers a testament to the spirit of the stretcher-bearers but serves as a reminder of the fee associated with valour-inducing scenarios.

Overall, this is a beautifully written book oozing hours of research and passion. The great value of this book to all ADF medical personnel creates hesitation in criticising it in any way. As a General Service Officer within the Royal Australian Army Medical Corps, I would recommend it to all my colleagues. It epitomises the Australian spirit of mateship and loyalty, and would therefore leave a lasting impression on a broad range of readers interested in such matters.