



The Iraq War: A Military History

By Williamson Murray, Robert H. Scales Jr.

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In this unprecedented account of the intensive air and ground operations in Iraq, two of America's most distinguished military historians bring clarity and depth to the first major war of the new millennium. Reaching beyond the blaring headlines, embedded videophone reports, and daily Centcom briefings, Williamson Murray and Robert Scales analyze events in light of past military experiences, present battleground realities, and future expectations.

The Iraq War puts the recent conflict into context. Drawing on their extensive military expertise, the authors assess the opposing aims of the Coalition forces and the Iraqi regime and explain the day-to-day tactical and logistical decisions of infantry and air command, as British and American troops moved into Basra and Baghdad. They simultaneously step back to examine long-running debates within the U.S. Defense Department about the proper uses of military power and probe the strategic implications of those debates for America's buildup to this war. Surveying the immense changes that have occurred in America's armed forces between the Gulf conflicts of 1991 and 2003--changes in doctrine as well as weapons--this volume reveals critical meanings and lessons about the new "American way of war" as it has unfolded in Iraq.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

The practice of "embedding" journalists in combat units provided a good deal of spectacular, timely footage, but tended to restrict insight to the frontline perspective of riflemen and vehicle crews. Murray and Scales provide a lucid and leavened look at the larger-scale forces shaping the war. Murray (A War to Be Won), currently a fellow at the Institute of Defense Analysis, is an eminent military historian, and Scales (Yellow Smoke), a retired major general and former commandant of the Army War College, is a familiar commentator on security issues. In this operational history, they eschew discussion of such abstractions as whether the war was a "revolution in military affairs." Instead, they show how, since the Gulf War of 1991, each of the services (army, air force, navy and marines) improved its mastery of the craft of war: individually integrating technology, training, and doctrine while at the same time cultivating a "jointness" that eroded, if it did not quite eliminate, traditional rivalries at the operational level. The result, they argue, was a virtuoso performance in 2003 that did not depend on Iraqi ineffectiveness, a model exercise in maneuver warfare at the operational level that stands comparison with any large-scale operation in terms of effectiveness and economy. The authors complement their work with competent surveys of Iraq's history and of how the U.S. armed forces recovered from the Vietnam debacle, and with an excellent appendix describing the weapons systems that dominated America's television screens. While the short duration of the war's main push—three weeks from start to finish—works against systematic analysis, and there will be much more material to surface and be sifted in the coming years, Murray and Scales set the standard for future works.

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Review

In their coverage of Operation Iraqi Freedom...embedded reporters provided vertical depth but little horizontal scope. Profound portraits of individual soldiers and units were rarely complemented by competent narratives placing the various military operations in the context of a grand strategic view. That is the job not of war correspondents but of military *historians*. Williamson Murray, a senior fellow at the Institute of Defense Analysis, and Major General Robert H. Scales Jr., a former commandant of the Army War College, fill the void. (Robert D. Kaplan *The Atlantic* 2003-11-01)

Murray and Scales provide a lucid and leavened look at the larger-scale forces shaping the war. (*Publishers Weekly* 2003-09-29)

Williamson Murray and Robert Scales, both American military academics, have produced a superlative record of the invasion--part history, part critique and part doctrinal template for the future. Technical and operational aspects are explained clearly without losing the depth required to make this a serious study. (*The Economist* 2003-11-29)

For those wanting a detailed analysis of the strategic and operational dimensions of the recent war, this is the book. (Tim Dunne *Times Higher Education Supplement* 2003-11-28)

The academic depth of Williamson Murray and the professional experience of Major General Robert Scales ensure that their lively account of the war against Iraq is a superior, authoritative product. Its focus is operational (neither Donald Rumsfeld nor Paul Wolfowitz appears in the index), but the authors acknowledge the importance of political context, especially the 'sustaining power of tyranny' even in the face of a 'shock and awe' air assault. (Lawrence D. Freedman *Foreign Affairs* 2004-01-01)

Murray and Scales offer plenty of detailed combat accounts. But largely, their book seeks to step back and put the war in a larger frame. (Harry Levins *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* 2003-12-14)

Military historians Murray and Scales have written an enormously detailed description and analysis of the U.S.-led campaign to overthrow Saddam Hussein's regime in Iraq in March-April 2003. Their book's value lies in its step-by-step report on the invasion. (W. Spencer *Choice* 2004-03-01)

The authors clearly had access to major military decision-makers and after-action reports. But as seasoned military historians, they go far beyond mere reportage, offering concise judgements about both the planning and the conduct of the campaign...Mr. Murray and Mr. Scales provide an illuminating look at the ground campaign that culminated in the capture of Baghdad...The authors' discussion of the war's ramifications is excellent and alone is worth the price of the book...More detailed analyses of the war will follow this book. By all means, read them. But the insights and judgments of Williamson Murray and Robert Scales make *The Iraq War* a book that will stand the test of time. (Mackubin Thomas Owens *Washington Times* 2004-03-21)

Murray and Scales, both American military academics, have produced a superlative record of the invasion--part history, part critique and part doctrinal template for the future (Lawrence D. Freedman *The Economist*)

Murray and Scales are serious military historians [and] have a knack for integrating tactical vignettes into their operational narrative . . . Details like these give the reader a bit of the taste and smell of the fighting. More important, [the authors] use them adroitly to highlight factors that shaped the thinking of American military commanders at key stages and to point out critical lessons about the conduct of modern war . . . What emerges from their book is a far more comprehensive view of a far more complicated war than the vast majority of readers may have gleaned from the snapshots provided by the news media during the 23 days of major combat operations. (Kenneth M. Pollack *New York Times Book Review*)

About the Author

Williamson Murray is Senior Fellow at the Institute for Defense Analysis, Washington, D.C.

Major General Robert H. Scales, Jr., U.S. Army (Retired), brings perspective as head of the army's team of Gulf War historians and chief author of *Certain Victory*, the army's official postwar analysis of that conflict. He has also served as Commandant of the Army War College and, most recently, is author of *Yellow Smoke: The Future of Land Warfare for America's Military*.

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