
tale and is recommended for this overlooked portion of the RAF's air war over Europe in World War II.

Steve Agoratus, Hamilton NJ



The Scrapyards: Aircraft Salvage Around Davis-Monthan AFB Volume 1—1980s. By Graham Robson. Horncastle UK: Tempest Books, 2023. Photographs. Pp 195 . \$ 55

The subjects of this pictorial, illustrated with nearly 200 photographs of decommissioned aircraft, are the scrapyards engaged in the metals and parts recovery businesses and aircraft refurbishing. They conduct their operations immediately adjacent to Davis-Monthan AFB's facility for retired and scrapped aircraft. Aside from museums and aircraft on display, Davis-Monthan is, for the most part, the final destination for military aviation's discards.

Once known as the Military Aircraft Storage and Disposition Center (MASDC), it is now known properly as the Aerospace Maintenance and Regeneration Group (AMARG), although many aviation buffs have for decades referred to it simply as the "boneyard." As one turns this book's pages, looks at the photos of aircraft acquired by the scrapyards, and reads the supporting narrative, a sense of bittersweetness hits. On the one hand, the decommissioned aircraft are there because the military has moved on to a newer generation or because of treaty obligations. But, on the other hand, they invoke a feeling of nostalgic sentiment and, at the same time, a sense of loss. They bring back memories of aircraft ranging from the supersonic B-58 Hustler, to C-124 Globemasters, KC-97Ls, B-52s, and many others. The aircraft sent there are from not just the Air Force. One will discover Navy F-8s, P-3s, and the E-1B Tracer, among others. The Army's H-34s and the H-37 Mojave, as well, experienced their ends in the scrapyards. Even the iconic Air Force F-105D, famous for its combat operations taking it to Hanoi's doorstep, found its way here for an unceremonious end.

During my first visit to the "boneyard" in the 1970s, I realized that there were aircraft of historical significance under threat of being reduced to piles of aluminum ingots. I saw so many that had a role to play in history and that, on a personal level, had been a part of my military experiences. What especially caught my eye, however, was something I had seen in a book when I was a child in the mid-1950s. There in front of me was perhaps the only existing example of a Bell Helicopter XV-3. Why was it of historical importance? It represented this country's first attempt to produce a tiltrotor aircraft (think of it as the forebearer of the V-22 Osprey), and what I was seeing was a forgotten wreck. The Army, thankfully, later rescued it and years later, after extensive restoration by the original builders, it went on display at the National Museum of the Air Force.

When I returned to Davis-Monthan in the late 1980s, it was to deliver BGM-109G Ground Launched Cruise Missiles for destruction under the terms of the 1987 Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty. Again, I walked through the boneyard and recognized many of the aircraft awaiting their fate and recalled the role they played defending America during the Cold War. There ahead of me were B-52s, decommissioned per treaty requirements, all awaiting a huge chopping device.

This volume's photographs were assembled from Robson's collection taken four decades ago in the 1980s. As I looked at the aircraft, I sensed that, like me, many readers perusing them will travel down memory lane and, hopefully, have fond memories of a time now long gone. For younger readers, the aircraft seen here should prove equally interesting and informative. This book will probably be the catalyst for many conversations about the aircraft. Enjoy reading it.

John Cirafici, Milford DE



Red Dragon 'Flankers': China's Prolific 'Flanker' Family. By Andreas Rupprecht. Wein, Austria: Harpia Publishing, 2022. Glossary. Appendix. Bibliography. Index. Photographs. Illustrations. Map. Diagrams. Pp. 256 paperback. \$44.40. ISBN: 9-78-1-95039-410-4

Andreas Rupprecht is an aviation journalist who has authored several books on China's military aviation, including *Modern Chinese Warplanes* (a directory of Chinese Air Force combat aircraft) and *Flashpoint China* (Chinese air power and regional security). He works as a Chinese military aviation researcher and China news reporter for international magazines.

During the 1990s, China contracted with the Soviet Union/Russia for advanced technology aircraft, such as the Su-27 *Flanker*, for several reasons. First, China sought to modernize its military capabilities rapidly and acquire advanced fighter technology, to include long-range interception and combat capabilities. Second, at that time, Russia (the successor state to the Soviet Union) was facing economic challenges and saw arms sales as a way to generate revenue. The deal was mutually beneficial, providing China with advanced aircraft, and Russia with an economic opportunity. Additionally, the Su-27 purchase facilitated the development of indigenous fighter aircraft, contributing to China's goal of strengthening its defense capabilities and reducing its dependence on foreign military technology. China continued to enhance its indigenous spinoff, the J-11, capabilities, evolving it into various variants such as the J-11B and J-11D. These highlighted advancements in indigenous engines, avionics, and weaponry. This in-house development process resulted in disputes over technology transfer and Russia's concerns about in-

tellectual property. Russia regarded these aircraft as illegal copies and a breach of their formal agreement.

Rupprecht provides excellent overviews of *Flanker* variants produced in both Russia and China. His first chapter covers single-seat-fighter variants and related two-seaters, describing the genesis of this family (the Su-27SK and UBK). These evolved in China to the J-11B, C, and D. He also covers AL-31F and WS-10 turbojet engine development and aircraft history in both Russia and China. He describes technical proposals, contract negotiations, licensing-and-manufacturing agreements, along with the many problems they entailed. Rupprecht also describes design updates, flight testing, operational use, performance assessments, colorings, and markings.

Rupprecht provides additional similar chapters on two-seat, multirole-strike variants and carrier-borne fighter variants. Another chapter describes Chinese and Russian air-to-air, air-to-ground, air-to-surface, and anti-ship weapons; guided bombs; rockets; mines; and targeting, navigation, and electronic warfare pods. His final chapter discusses operational service, including Russian and Chinese *Flanker* assignments to air divisions, regiments, and brigades. Photographs of *Flanker* variants are included with their assignments. Rupprecht concludes with an appendix which is a recognition guide with color side-views of the many variants. Included is an interesting family tree that shows ten original Su-27 models and 25 Chinese modifications and indigenous production models.

Rupprecht provides an excellent reference for those who are interested in Chinese military air power. His many quality photographs and discussions on contract negotiations and technical problems are of particular interest. The book provides an excellent political and operational history of Chinese *Flanker* evolution. There is a wealth of information—something to be kept on the shelf and continually revisited.

Frank Willingham, NASM docent



Battle for Grozny Volume 1: Prelude and the Way to the City, 1994. By Efim Sandler. Helion, 2023. Notes. Illustrations. Photographs. Maps. \$29.95. Pp. 78 paperback. ISBN: 978-1-804512-14-2

Following the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, the Russian military had reached the nadir of its powers. This coincided with a bold strike for independence by Chechnya, a small autonomous area in the Caucasus. Thus began, in late 1994, the First Chechen War. What followed was the worst post-World War II reversal for the Russian Army until three decades later in Ukraine.

Before describing the immediate events leading up to the conflict, Sandler devoted the monograph's first section to a summary of the region's tragic history of conquest by

Russia, and its continual resistance to occupation. Paralleling the external struggle has been a never-ending internal struggle between indigenous factions that would either seek Moscow's favor or change sides and oppose the Russians. That situation continues to the present, with Moscow's chosen faction in power.

When the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991, the various "republics" within the Union elected for independence, including those immediately to Chechnya's south. Chechnya, likewise, sought its independence. Russia, under President Yeltsin's direction, responded by declaring a state of emergency in November 1991, denied independence, and began the process of reining in the local Chechen leadership. Chechnya forced his hand when Russian forces within the region came under attack. On 31 December 1993, Chechnya formally declared its independence.

The monograph addresses the creation of combat units within Chechnya, who led them, their efforts to acquire weaponry from surrounded Russian units based within the region, and how equipment was sabotaged before Chechens took possession. Russia, initially attempting to avoid direct use of its military, first recruited Chechens to form opposition militias for an assault on Grozny (Chechnya's capital) against those supporting independence. That assault took place on October 15, 1994 and resulted in a complete rout of pro-Russian Chechens. What followed in November is the key focus of this monograph—preparation for a Russian Army advance on Grozny.

What took place in preparation for the assault is striking in what was not accomplished. There was a systemic failure to properly mission plan, rehearse, brief, establish effective lines of communications, or allow for battlefield flexibility. Mission planning intelligence was practically nonexistent. In other words, there was total incompetence in planning and execution. This is similar to what would happen 28 years later in Ukraine. Equally telling was the dismal state that the Russian military had fallen to on the eve of major operations against Chechnya: poor or unserviceable equipment, inexperienced officers and men, unfunded requirements for supplies, and critical under-manning. I personally recall the day-to-day difficulties of the Russian military when I worked with elements of the Russian Air Force in the very same period, during a time when the US military sought a positive relationship with its opposite numbers in Russia.

This volume closes in December 1994, when Russian forces commenced their advance on Grozny. Although it is laden with tactical-level detail, the monograph, more importantly, provides a picture of a military totally unprepared to go to war. With the current Ukrainian war in mind, one should read it as a lesson tragically not learned.

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