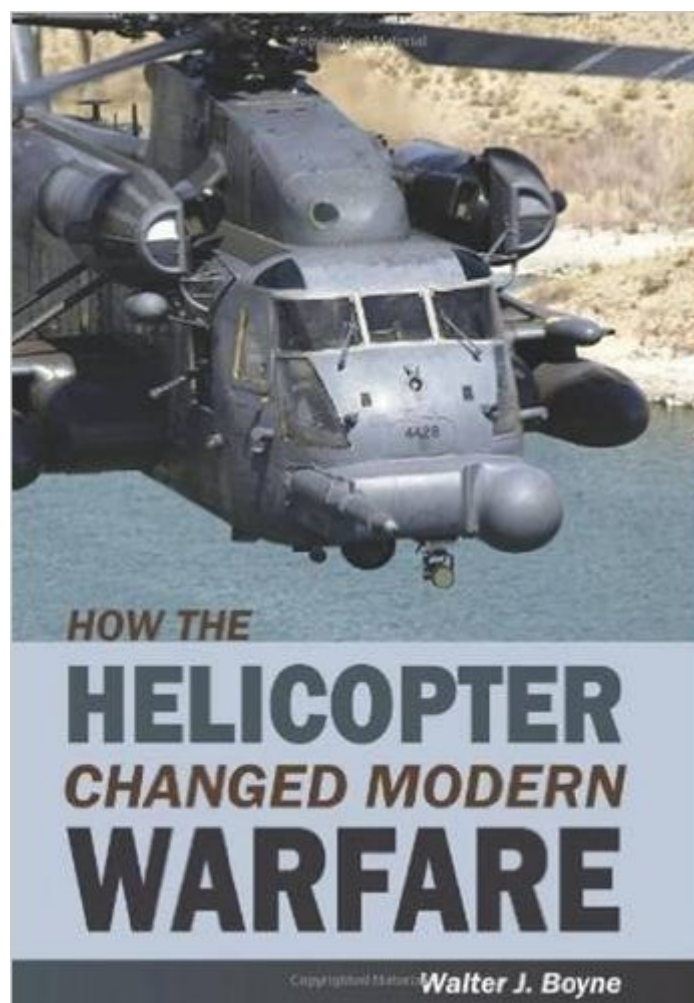


The book was found

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

How the Helicopter Has Changed Modern WarfareBy Walter J. BoyneFrom its introduction to warfare in the 1940s to its role in Middle East operations, the helicopter has had a profound effect on military tactics and techniques. It has evolved from a means of transport to a precise component of the Special Operations Force. Apart from the challenges its design faced on the battlefield, this rotary-wing aircraft also faced opposition from the very military that employed it. Author Walter J. Boyne leads readers through production designs and their connection to specific military strategies that helped the helicopter define its role in combat. He assigns cardinal importance to three of the early helicopter pioneers in the United States--Igor Sikorsky, Frank Piasecki, and Arthur Young--in the establishment of the industry. He also notes that as the industry grew larger, as procurement quantities increased, and as the services became more demanding in their requirements, the efforts of such pioneers was diluted. Considerations of logistics, spare parts, modifications, and per-unit cost began to drive the design parameters, forcing a more corporate guise upon the industry. Still, it is important to recognize that the influence of the three pioneers--Sikorsky, Piasecki and

Young--can still be seen today in service helicopters. Although its contributions to reconnaissance, transport, assault, and attack made it an invaluable tool during warfare, the helicopter suffered from the different services' focus on other arms and technology.

As always, Walt Boyne has delivered a book that goes beyond just the history of the subject. He has managed to take the history of the military development and use of the helicopter from its inception to today's battlefields and beyond, while keeping it all in context. I can't imagine another military aviation historian handling this subject better. Boyne describes the first combat search-and-rescue mission, of a downed liaison pilot and his three wounded passengers, flown by a US Army pilot in a newfangled Sikorsky YR-4B deep in the jungles of Burma. He then traces the subsequent development of military helicopter aviation, complete with the service rivalries and political machinations that alternately helped and hindered progress. I found his in-depth approach to the helicopter's coming-of-age during the Vietnam War of particular value. Boyne, as usual, pulls no punches when describing the tactical, strategic, and political decisions, and blunders, that surrounded the growing combat importance of the helicopter. The history of how the employment of the helicopter surmounted technical shortcomings with in-the-field innovations and the sheer bravado and courage of the aircrews. This book, however, does not present a myopic, US-only viewpoint. No, Boyne delves into the world of Soviet/Russian helicopter development and employment. And it does not end with descriptions of the amazing feats of today's helicopter crews in Iraq and Afghanistan. He winds up this fascinating history with a clear-eyed look ahead at the future of helicopters in military engagements yet to come. Boyne's final paragraph is worth quoting: "The helicopter has significantly changed the face of modern warfare.

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.

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