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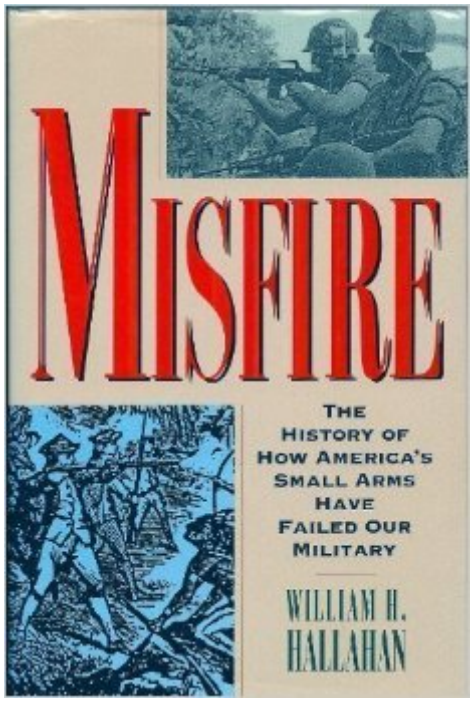
Misfire: The Story Of How America's Small Arms Have Failed Our Military



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Synopsis

Exposing the American military's appalling failures in the arming of its infantry, an examination of the U.S. Army Ordnance Corps traces its historical obsession with accurate, slow firepower and conservative use of ammunition--often at the cost of soldiers' lives.

Book Information

Hardcover: 580 pages

Publisher: Scribner; First edition (October 17, 1994)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0684193590

ISBN-13: 978-0684193595

Product Dimensions: 1.2 x 6.5 x 9.5 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.8 pounds

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Customer Reviews

Though there are some errors in his historical procedure - Hallahan sometimes puts out info and dosen't back it up with historical data the book is excellent. If one believes that our goverment and senior leadership supplies only the best equipment to our troops read this book. If one thinks that goverment can run ANYTHING more efficiently then private industry read this book. And if one is thinking about enlisting head full of Tom Clancy's prose and recruiting commercials - well you know. I wish this book was still in print. An excellent read.

While the author presents a very interesting and enlightening view of army ordnance and small arms, the book has some holes. The most annoying with respect to the thesis is that the author consistently introduces men in the Ordnance department as new and progressive, and then two pages later they're reactionary with no explanation of the transformation.Furthermore, as soon as he strays from strictly smallarms matters (especially in the chapters concerning the period between the World Wars), his statements vary from misleading to blatantly incorrect. Also, he describes the Dreyse needle-gun, differently, three times, and only gets it right once. This leads me to doubt the accuracy of the book with weapons I am not as familiar with. Finally, there are a surprising number

of typos and grammatical errors.I highly recommend reading it, but keep a supply of salt grains handy while you do.

At least in terms of the eras with which I am familiar (post-War Between the States to the book's present), it's an interesting read with some serious flaws. The book is riddled with factual and technical errors, going beyond simple typos - of which there are a disconcerting number considering it's from a major publishing house - to actually bring Hallahan's theses into doubt. It's fairly clear he has no practical experience with some of the weapons he's writing about (e.g. the Lewis gun, the Benet-Mercie/Hotchkiss Portable, the Vickers MMG) and either praising or damning, as well as facts regarding the design, testing, and production of various rifles (e.g. the M1917 Enfield), or the field use of such arms. While I don't hold the author completely responsible for these issues, as some of them arise from more recent scholarship, it's still troubling to find multiple errors on a page with regularity.Get the book because it's an interesting story based on real events, but don't regard it as a documentary or serious scholarly work. The earlier review that said to keep some salt handy while reading is spot-on.

I gotta admit I didn't read the whole book. The focus of my interest was the development of the M1 Garand (which I carried in the USMC), the M14, and M16 rifles and this book certainly did NOT disappoint. But be aware that this is one of those books that perfectly illustrate the truth of that old bit of folk wisdom about a statement that should and does cause consternation among those affected: "I'm from the government and I'm here to help." Army Ordinance made ssssoooo many foolish decisions, based on false assumptions and ego, that you just wanna grit your teeth and knock a few heads together. And, unforgivably, many fine young men died in Vietnam because of those foolish decisions.

This book shocked and angered me. 180 years of American troops armed with small arms that have been far beneath the firepower our troops could have had. Halahan shows that our troops could easily have had fast firing breechloading muskets in the War Of 1812, repeating rifles in the Civil War, machine guns by the middle of that bloody conflict and on and on and on. Why have our troops never been armed with better weapons? Because our design and procurement operations have been controlled by a consistent philosophy: if we give the troops fast firing weapons, they'll use up too much ammunition and cause supply problems. I can't remember a book that has made me so angry. Halahan should have a chapter in every high school history text. This is a horrifying

history of American troops sacrified by a philosophy that I cannot accept as valid - and neither will you.

Why is Hallahan's "Misfire" out of print only five years after its publication? As important as this book's message is, it's far more than the pinpointing of a disastrous military philosophy; more even than an indictment of military boneheadedness and the incredible intransigence of bumbling bureaucrats. It's also an engaging work of history with threads stretching back to the Revolutionary War, with intriguing sidelights on a number of historical figures including Washington, Jefferson, Lincoln and his cabinet, almost down to the present--all written in lively prose. Very readable from beginning to end, and highly recommended.

Hallahan's book is the startling story of the inadequate arming of America's infantry by the Army Ordinance Corps. Through nearly 2 centuries of failure (the only exception being the choice of the M-1 in WWII), this organization continues with its business ostensibly answering to no one.This is an important book with respect to the history of technology as well as in the book's demonstration of the government's failure in making rational decisions with regard to technology.

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