

*Book Reviews*

sions in the Pacific. These amphibious landings were among the many unheralded heroic acts during the war. Much has been written about the men going ashore but this book tells the story from the perspective of the Coast Guard coxswains driving those LCVPs. The author notes that "if a single weapon could be credited with winning the war," Dwight D. Eisenhower explained that it was the "Higgins Boat" (p. 3).

This book provides valuable information on an area of World War II known to so few. The story of the Attack Transports (APA), the LCVP, and the Coast Guard's participation in war needs to be widely told and Ken Wiley has made a significant contribution to that telling. This very-well written and organized account of *D-Days in the Pacific with the U.S. Coast Guard in World War II* should appeal to both scholars and the general public and should be in the library of every World War II and Coast Guard historian.

C. Douglas Kroll

College of the Desert  
Palm Desert, California

***Near Miss: The Army Air Forces' Guided Bomb Program in World War II.***  
By Donald J. Hanle. Lanham, Md: Scarecrow Press, 2007. ISBN 0-8108-5776-6. Photographs. Notes. Bibliography. Index. Pp. xxiv, 339. \$65.00.

Early in this book, Donald Hanle, a retired U.S. Air Force intelligence officer, notes that he set out to write a dissertation on the rise of precision-guided munitions, expecting that World War II would only be a precursor. Instead, he was "amazed" (p. ix) to find so many records in the National Archives that the subject warranted its own study. His book demonstrates that the U.S. Army Air Forces (USAAF) and civilian research agencies did indeed expend major resources on guided weapons development during World War II—and that is leaving aside the substantial efforts of the Navy that he does not treat. Yet very few of these weapons were deployed in that war.

The book is organized by subject because there were many parallel developments, which the author divides into four basic types: glide bombs, vertical bombs, powered bombs, and jet bombs. Glide bombs had wings and a stabilization and control system to create a stand-off weapon that a bomber might launch outside the target's defenses. Vertical bombs had tails with control surfaces that permitted either an operator in an aircraft or an automated seeker in the bomb's nose to modify the trajectory of a gravity bomb. Powered bombs were piston-engine aircraft designed to dive on a target—including, late in the war, "war-weary" heavy bombers directed at German V-weapons sites on the Continent. Jet bombs, finally, were precursors of the modern cruise missile—the main one, the JB-2, being simply a copy of the V-1. Of these four types, only a few were deployed: the GB-1 glide bomb, which proved *less* accurate than "dumb bombs" when dropped on Cologne in spring 1944, the VB-1 Azon ("azimuth-only"-guidance) vertical bomb, which saw some success against bridges in the China-Burma-India

theater and was the only guided weapon declared operational, and the Aphrodite and Castor war-weary bombers, none of which ever hit its intended target.

Hanle explains this unimpressive record as being the product of: (1) "immature" technology, notably in electronics; (2) poorly coordinated USAAF and civilian efforts; (3) resistance in the operational air force; and (4) USAAF chief-of-staff "Hap" Arnold's "leadership style." Indeed, the book will not please Arnold's hero-worshippers, as Hanle notes the deleterious effects of the general's weak organizational skills, violent temper, and arbitrary interventions that, for one, forced the GB-1 into an operational test even though it was unpromising. He is especially critical of Arnold's push for the JB-2, which was to be manufactured in huge quantities for the invasion of Japan, even though it would have diverted a significant percentage of U.S. munitions production and overseas shipping.

*Near Miss* is fairly well-written, but its organization leads to some confusion and to the use of too many "signposts" in the narrative pointing to subjects treated elsewhere. Some of his points get lost as a result. The book is a somewhat dry, specialist work likely to be of interest mainly to historians of strategic bombing, precision-guided weapons, and guided-missile development. Nonetheless, it is valuable, as it opens up a topic too long neglected.

Michael J. Neufeld

National Air and Space Museum  
Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.

***Nylon and Bombs: DuPont and the March of Modern America.*** By Pap A. Ndiaye. Translated by Elborg Forster. Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007. ISBN 978-0-8018-8444-3. Photographs. Tables. Notes. Essay on sources and historiography. Index. Pp. 289. \$45.00.

Pap A. Ndiaye teaches history at l'École des Haute Études en sciences sociales in Paris, and *Nylon and Bombs* appeared originally in French in 2001. Although not substantially updated in Elborg Forster's fluid translation, the book remains fresh because of its innovative approach to the history of DuPont, one of the most studied companies in the world. Moreover, the work carries broader historiographical implications.

Ndiaye combines the history of DuPont's development in the 1930s of an immensely successful consumer product, nylon—the first synthetic fiber—with the company's subsequent role in the making of an even more transformational public product, plutonium for nuclear weapons. The linchpin is DuPont's chemical engineers.

Producing poison gas in World War I enabled America's new, university-trained chemical engineers to demonstrate their skills. Over the next two decades they gradually transformed DuPont from a shop-based powder and explosives business into a science-based mass producer for consumers (less revolutionary consumer items preceded nylon). This shift gave them their