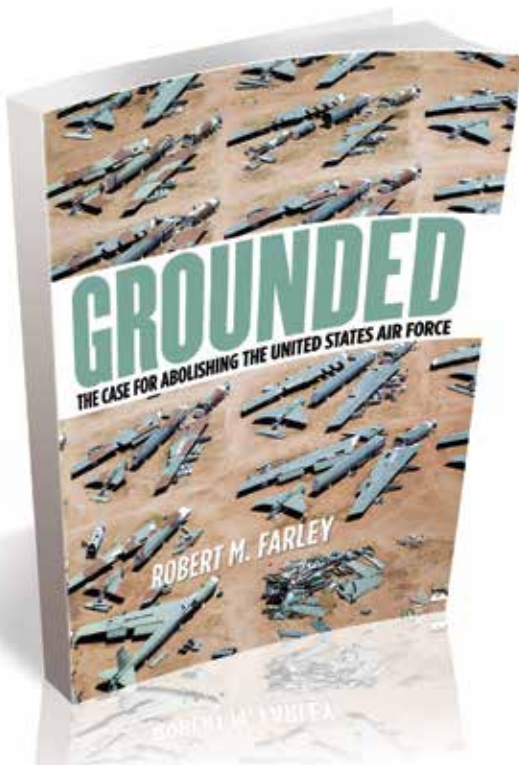


PROFESSIONAL READING LIST

The Defense Acquisition Professional Reading List is intended to enrich the knowledge and understanding of the civilian, military, contractor, and industrial workforce who participate in the entire defense acquisition enterprise. These book reviews/recommendations are designed to complement the education and training that are vital to developing the essential competencies and skills required of the Defense Acquisition Workforce. Each issue of the *Defense Acquisition Research Journal (ARJ)* will contain one or more reviews of suggested books, with more available on the *Defense ARJ* Web site.

We encourage *Defense ARJ* readers to submit reviews of books they believe should be required reading for the defense acquisition professional. The reviews should be 400 words or fewer, describe the book and its major ideas, and explain its relevance to defense acquisition. Please send your reviews to the Managing Editor, *Defense Acquisition Research Journal*: Norene.Fagan-Blanch@dau.mil.



Featured Book

Grounded: The Case for Abolishing the United States Air Force

Author(s):

Robert M. Farley

Publisher:

The University Press of Kentucky,
Lexington

Copyright Date: 2014

ISBN:

978-0813144955 (hardcover)

978-0813144979 (ePub)

Hard/Softcover:

Hardcover, 264 pages

Reviewed by:

Aleisha R. Jenkins-Bey,
Assistant Editor, *Defense ARJ*

Review:

University of Kentucky Professor Robert M. Farley has written a very controversial account of why he believes the assets of the U.S. Air Force should be broken down and dispersed among the other military Services, namely the army and navy, removing the need for an independent air force. Professor Farley includes a proposition for a new structure of reorganization for the future of the nation's airpower, which would largely change the focus of the military Services. This review provides an objective analysis of the book, *Grounded: The Case for Abolishing the United States Air Force*.

On one hand, the author does a good job of presenting his case using several instances in the history of the U.S. Air Force where it was not able to fulfill part of the initial intent of its independence, which was the ability to win wars from the air with very little loss of life and with better cost efficiency. Professor Farley additionally does an outstanding job of enlightening readers on how often and how many new aircraft are designed to do a specific job, then are deemed obsolete due to ever-evolving technology or are grounded for technical issues. Along with a few characteristics of the U.S. Air Force that create political and military problems for the United States, he effectively lists four proposed principles of reorganization for the removal of the U.S. Air Force's independence. Also to the author's credit, he acknowledges the importance of military aviators and the courage of members of the U.S. Air Force, reiterating that *Grounded* "should be understood as part of the opening gambit for a restructuring of U.S. military institutions."

On the other hand, perhaps not all bases were covered in the consideration of the revamping of the military Services, which proposes to remove the independence of just one of the Services, but would create great debate within the acquisition community. The question posed by Professor Farley that seemed to jump out as a basic concern is: "Does giving an air force independence solve more problems than it creates?" However, because our independent air force has now existed since 1947, should not the question be: "Does *removing* the independence of an air force solve more problems than it creates?" Professor Farley does not discuss exactly by what means the nation will save money should the U.S. Air Force be abolished, although his plan addresses cost efficiency. Following his plan for reorganization, and taking into account his four principles, it seems that in dividing all of the

U.S. Air Force's assets—including aircraft, weapons, personnel, bases, and missions, all mentioned by Professor Farley—the Department of Defense, the nation, and the military services would lose not just money, but decades of knowledge and expertise possessed by current members of the U.S. Air Force. Understandably, many airmen would either not want to join one of the other Services or would be unable to retain their prior specialties in the army or navy. He does not discuss the issues of training personnel or the cost and availability of supplies and uniforms. There would likely need to be a shift of responsibilities for existing units in the army and navy to provide ample air defense during this restructuring—also not discussed. Another important consideration would be the loss of a seat for the U.S. Air Force on the Joint Chiefs of Staff, in which the Service chiefs ensure the personnel readiness, policy, planning, and training of their respective military Services. However, once again, readers should consider the book an “opening gambit” for restructuring, not the full plan.

After several years of perfecting his argument, Professor Farley's dispersal of U.S. Air Force assets seems well laid out between the army and navy for a new kind of air domination. His argument is supported with detailed evidence. Defense acquisition professionals can benefit from Professor Farley's discussion of the Clausewitz approach and his comparison of the existence of the U.S. Air Force to that of the Royal Air Force, the aerial warfare branch of the British Armed Forces, which is also the oldest independent air force in the world; and the Luftwaffe, the aerial warfare branch of the German Wehrmacht during World War II. However, his work fails to recognize the limited gains and insurmountable losses that would result from the removal of the U.S. Air Force's independence, and thus does not answer the question of whether giving the U.S. Air Force independence, or taking it, would solve more problems than it creates. It will be interesting to see how the rest of this long-running argument plays out in regard to defense acquisition.

Aleisha R. Jenkins-Bey is the assistant editor of the *Defense Acquisition Research Journal*. Prior to her current position, she was the lead editor in Military OneSource's Arlington office. She has served as a commissioned officer in the Air Defense Artillery branch of the U.S. Army.