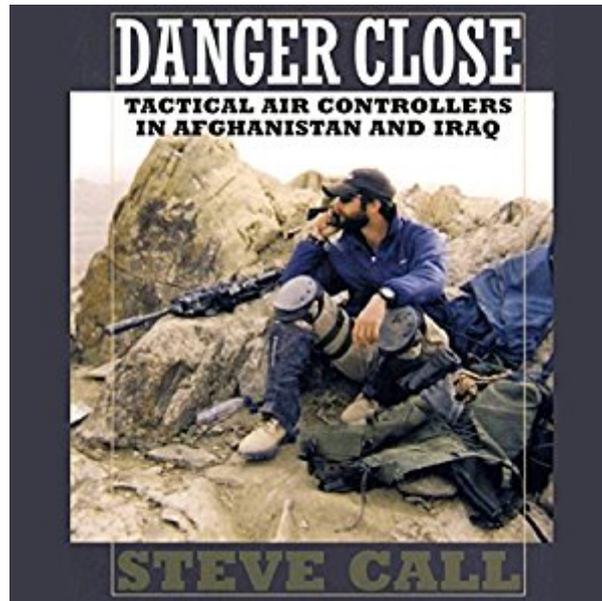


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Danger Close: Tactical Air Controllers In Afghanistan And Iraq



Synopsis

"America had a secret weapon," writes Steve Call of the period immediately following September 11, 2001, as planners contemplated the invasion of Afghanistan. This weapon consisted of small teams of Special Forces operatives trained in close air support (CAS) who, in cooperation with the loose federation of Afghan rebels opposed to the Taliban regime, soon began achieving impressive - and unexpected - military victories over Taliban forces and the al-Qaeda terrorists they had sponsored. The astounding success of CAS tactics coupled with ground operations in Afghanistan soon drew the attention of military decision makers and would eventually factor into the planning for another campaign: Operation Iraqi Freedom. But who, exactly, are these air-power experts and what is the function of the TACPs (Tactical Air Control Parties) in which they operate? *Danger Close* provides a fascinating look at a dedicated, courageous, innovative, and often misunderstood and misused group of military professionals. Drawing on the gripping first-hand accounts of their battlefield experiences, Steve Call allows the TACPes to speak for themselves. He accompanies their narratives with informed analysis of the development of CAS strategy, including potentially controversial aspects of the interservice rivalries between the Air Force and the Army, which have at times complicated and even obstructed the optimal employment of TACP assets. *Danger Close* makes clear, however, that the systematic coordination of air power and ground forces played an invaluable supporting role in the initial military victories in both Afghanistan and Iraq. This first-ever examination of the intense, life-and-death world of the close air support specialist will introduce listeners to a crucial but little-known aspect of contemporary warfare and add a needed chapter in American military history studies. This book is published by Texas A&M University Press. It is part of the Williams-Ford Texas A&M University Military History Series.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"Danger Close" is a straightforward and clear look at the work of (largely) USAF Joint Terminal Air Controllers in the opening phases of the Afghanistan and Iraq campaigns. The author describes the day-to-day work of USAF enlisted controllers embedded with US SF and conventional manoeuvre forces as well as some of the wider organisational and conceptual challenges that impeded Close Air Support (CAS) development in the 1990's and in the opening phases of Afghanistan and Iraq. Writing very much from the perspective of the US ALO/TACP community, the author explains the lack of institutional interest in CAS by the USAF (and to a slightly lesser extent, the US Army) prior to 9/11 led to neither service being well prepared to integrate CAS with tactical manoeuvre. His description of organisational, doctrinal and procedural innovations between the start of OEF and the fall of Baghdad is clear and insightful (perhaps less so for the reader without a military background). At the tactical level, his first-hand accounts of the efficiency and effectiveness of US enlisted controllers in both operations demonstrate the fallacy of the old perception that JTACs needed to be both pilots and officers to be safe and effective. A limitation of the book is that it is written very much from an airman's perspective and is to a large degree focused on telling the stories of the guys at the coal face. Although the author is not a rabid USAF partisan (he is open and forthcoming about USAF institutional shortcomings) his perspective is very much that of an airman and his interest is the relatively narrow one (albeit somewhat important) of getting weapons from aircraft onto targets.

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