

**Hackworth, David H. (with Tom Mathews). Hazardous Duty.
New York: William Morrow, 1996.**

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Hackworth, David H. (with Tom Mathews). *Hazardous Duty*. New York: William Morrow, 1996.

Col. David Hackworth's new book, *Hazardous Day*, is an intelligent, detailed and objective analysis of the state of the American military on the eve of the twenty-first century. Once past the occasional self-glorification and American hyperbole, there is much to learn from a highly decorated, combat veteran of World War II, Korea and Vietnam. With two Distinguished Service Crosses, nine Silver stars, eight Bronze stars for valor and eight Purple Hearts, Hackworth's comments and observations have the ring of legitimacy. Having toured America's foreign battlefields from the Gulf War to Bosnia as a war correspondent he has used his experience to identify key weaknesses in his nation's ability to fight and win wars.

A lot of ground is covered in this book. He is critical of gays in the military and particularly women in combat. Political generals were saying what a great job women were doing, he noted, but "[o]ut in the field, unit commanders and NCOs were telling a different story." The press coverage of the Gulf War was poor because "most of the press just wasn't competent to report a war" and General Schwarzkopf's Joint Information Bureau (JIB) is referred to as "Thought Control Central." His criticism of politicians and generals alike is unsparing. President Clinton, the "draft dodger," is characterized as incompetent in military matters and General Schwarzkopf's performance in the Gulf War is subjected to a particularly unflattering analysis. Yet these, and other comments, are mere sidebars to the larger issues he addresses, such as weapons systems, "real-time" intelligence capabilities, organization, future warfare, the "Readiness Gap," America's strategic position and the nation's military leadership.

Hackworth flatly condemns the expensive weapons systems the US does not need or do not work, such as the faulty \$13 billion Sargeant York antiaircraft system, the "big joke" Patriot battery, the horrifically expensive B-1 bomber, grounded during the Gulf War for safety reasons, the \$4 billion a copy *Sea Wolf* sub replacing the excellent *Los Angeles Class* models, and the MILSTAR satellite system designed to sustain communications in a nuclear environment. As for less high-tech weaponry, the M-60 machine gun is "flat worn out," the infantry possess poor radios, jungle boots, and NBC kit, the Marine Humvees are poorly designed to protect their highly exposed TOW missile crews and the navy's anti-mine capability is not good enough. Only the M1A1 Abrams main battle tank and the A-10 Warthog close air support aircraft are given high marks. The military has all the satellites, carriers, tank divisions, bombers and fighter squadrons it needs, says Hackworth. The problem is that low-tech and high-tech capabilities are out of sync. The cutting edge is being sacrificed for "whiz-bang" weapons.

A particular bone of contention is the deficiency in America's "real-time" intelligence capabilities. For \$30 billion a year the country gets poor cooperation between the CIA, Defense Intelligence Agency and the National Security Agency. The real problem, however, is the sheer quantity of complicated information available, making it impossible to digest and synthesize it in time for tactical use. He believes, with justification, that the intelligence community failed in Desert Storm and other operations. Everyone, from the

CIA to the press, to the military believed fighting the Iraqis in the desert would be a bloody affair but Hackworth changed his mind when he got on the ground in Saudi Arabia. Without the use of a billion dollar satellite he concluded that the much heralded Republican Guard was a "third-rate mob" and came out of the desert with little respect for Iraq's fighting ability.

Hackworth also sees much duplicity in the military. The Marines, a light infantry hit and run force, has augmented its power to fight big Army-type battles while the Army is buying ships to replicate the Corps' floating reserve strategic mission. There are four air forces, four legal corps, four intelligence commands, four training systems, four supply systems, and four research and development systems. This duplication has a serious effect on the cutting edge. Of the 732,000 people on active duty in the Marines and Army, there are only 193,000 trigger pullers. Hackworth's solution involves merging the Army and Marine Corps, eliminating the separate service chiefs, merging intelligence assets, logistics, and restoring the draft. His best idea may be to integrate airlift capability but it may take an act of God to merge the Army and Marines. Despite his excellent overview of the Army's organization, it is unfortunate that he did not address the concept of the new "brigade-based" army which is currently making the rounds of the military's professional journals.¹

Hackworth's ideas are all focused to prepare the military for the type of wars it will fight in the future. He cautions the reader that the Gulf War is not the model for future wars. Saddam Hussein did everything wrong. "What other opponent will ever grant us six months to build an overwhelming force right in front of his foxholes?" His idea that the United States is seeing a new face of war consisting of high-tech and "low and dirty" is not original. Authors such as Martin van Creveld have been on record as forwarding this view for some time.²

For the most part, Hackworth's evaluations make sense but there are two notable contradictions in the book. The first centers around what has been termed the "Readiness Gap." His insistence that serious deficiencies existed in the American build-up ability in the Gulf War are supported by experts in the field.³ Standard American battle doctrine called for the ability to deploy ten stateside divisions to Europe in 10 days. Yet after 150 days, only a fraction of that strength was in Saudi Arabia. Military air lift was insufficient and the difference was made up by civilian 747s. The Army was unprepared for battle after Christmas, 1990 and Hackworth speculates what would have happened if the Russians had come "galloping" through the Fulda Gap. The same logistical and fighting deficiencies were evident during the Korean crisis in the summer of 1950. Of the 40,000 troops stationed there, only 6,000 were fighters, the two brigades of the 2nd Infantry Division and 30 percent of the troops turned over every three months. Moreover, when US troops of the VII Corps deployed from Europe to Bosnia in 1995 they took, in Hackworth's opinion, far too long to bridge the Sava River. Despite the impressive evidence to the contrary, Hackworth insists that the "Readiness Gap" is a lot of hype, like the "Missile Gap."

The second apparent contradiction involves American air power in the Gulf War. While he states that air power never won the Gulf War or any other war, he adds that the ground war was not necessary but had to be fought because the Army and Marines had to justify their existence. If the ground war was unnecessary then the only conclusion to reach was that air power satisfied American strategic demands. It is these kinds of inconsistencies that undermine Hackworth's otherwise reasonable arguments.

As for America's future geo-strategic position, Hackworth believes the country has overstretched its military abilities and should pull back. For every US battalion in theater, another is preparing to go and one is coming back. With the US deployed from Somalia to Haiti on Operations Other Than War (OOTW), it is becoming harder to concentrate combat power. He especially desires a retreat from Korea where he sees the US forces there as nothing more than a trip wire. The South Korean strategy of extreme forward defense along the DMZ is incorrect and threatens the two brigades of the US 2nd Infantry Division deployed so close to the line with quick annihilation. Hackworth describes their position as suicidal. He points out that the South Koreans have assembled an "enormously powerful" force and they should defend the peninsula until US forces can intervene from their new positions on Guam. The navy should be primarily responsible for showing the flag in the Far East. He also sees NATO as irrelevant and just one more trip wire. The basis of Hackworth's argument is that the US no longer needs to protect South Korea, Japan and Germany, especially not when they are "cleaning our clocks" on the economic front. This underpins his basic philosophy of "fix America first."

The best part of the book is the author's observations on the soul of the American military. For Hackworth, "integrity is the very foundation" of the military but believes that at present it is a "sick institution." There are too many "Perfumed Princes" in the Pentagon's E-ring, all striving to please their political masters. During the mission to Somalia in 1992-93, the US had about 1,200 combat-ready-to-go infantry yet there were no less than twelve American generals in the theater, one for every company. At the end of World War II the US had 13 million soldiers. Now it has 1.5 million, but more generals than in World War II. The burgeoning military organization has diluted the selection process to high command. Once beyond the rank of Lt. Col., "very few real war fighters are left." Moreover, there is an ongoing effort to keep real war fighters out of high command. Hackworth cites two instances where the selection process broke down. In the first case, he was mystified how the navy could have been unaware of the psychological instability of Admiral Boorda which led to his suicide in May 1996, apparently brought about by the revelation that he was wearing combat medals he did not rate. The second instance involved the promotion of General William Garrison to command the Army's Special Warfare School at Fort Bragg after he had been responsible for the tactics that led to the deaths of 18 Army Rangers in Mogadishu in 1993. The illness of the Army is endemic and the only way to correct it is to attract and keep individuals dedicated to the principles of duty, honor, and country, and get rid of those who ticket punch. This may be as difficult as amalgamating the Army and Marines. As Hackworth himself noted, change in an institution the size of the American military can be thought of only in the long term.

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Endnotes

1. John R. Brinkerhoff, "The Brigade-Based New Army," *Parameters: US Army War College Quarterly*, XXVII, no. 3 (Autumn 1997).
2. Martin van Creveld, *The Transformation of War* (New York: The Free Press, 1991).
3. Yves J. Fontaine, "Strategic Logistics for Intervention Forces," *Parameters: US Army War College Quarterly*, XXVII, no. 4 (Winter 1997-98), p. 45.