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Book Review

Durant, Robert F. 2007. *The Greening of the U.S. Military: Environmental Policy, National Security, and Organizational Change*. Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press. xviii + 298 pp. ISBN: 978-1-58901-153-3 (paperback). Price: US\$29.95.

by Jurgen Brauer (27 March 2008)

When the United States bombed Afghan mountain ranges in an effort to flush out Taliban fighters and Osama bin-Laden cohorts, the world was reminded that war injures and kills not only humans but that it may have unfortunate side-effects on the rest of nature as well. In the heat of battle, the environment — from which we draw our sustenance and to which we must return after war — is often forgotten.

Yet even before the guns are spitting fire, the military can adversely affect the environment. If the world spends three percent of its annual income on the military, it is a reasonable first guess that the military also consumes about three percent of the world's annual natural resource take and that it returns to earth waste and effluents in like proportion. Thus, the military, like all other government agencies, businesses, and consumers might well rethink its environmental footprint even when it is not fighting war.

Robert Durant has produced an excellent, in-depth study of how the post-Cold War United States' military, the world's largest and most resource-intensive, has struggled to "green" itself. More precisely, he studies the intersection of societal demands regarding environmental stewardship and organizational change within the military to accommodate or resist these demands in the context of the military's primary mission of providing national security. Moving from "an ethic of sovereignty, secrecy, and sinecure [to] an ethic of accountability, transparency, and resource reallocation" (p. 2) is no easy task, Durant argues, and certainly not for an organization as large as the Pentagon. Of course, the Pentagon is as quintessential a political animal as they come, and Durant deftly places the story as much within the halls of Congress and changing U.S. administrations as within the infinite layers of military bureaucracy and inter-service rivalries.

In terms of specific subject matter, the book covers environmental issues regarding military bases, post-Cold War base-closures, and their (clean) transfer to civilian usage; natural resource management while fulfilling the military's need to train for anticipated conflicts; chemical munitions destruction; and pollution prevention and energy conservation. These cases are sandwiched between extensive and very detailed chapters on organizational theory and organizational change. Durant concludes that while the military can no longer live a world apart from environmental and natural resource regulations, neither can environmental advocates live a world apart from legitimate defense and national security objectives. When all is said and done, dialogue and compromise must continue.

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