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**EYES OF THE FLEET OVER VIETNAM:
RF-8 COMBAT
PHOTO-RECONNAISSANCE MISSIONS.**

Kenneth V. Jack.
Haverton, PA, Casemate Publishers. 2021.
228 pages.

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[Reviewer's Note: All statements of fact, analysis, or opinion are mine and do not reflect the official policy or position of the National Intelligence University, the Department of Defense or any of its components, or the U.S. government.]

Crafted from the author's firsthand experience as a photomate, declassified archives, and a collection of pilot experiences, *Eyes of the Fleet* is a great read for those most interested in the men and planes that acquired aerial reconnaissance for U.S. tactical commanders during the Vietnam War. The volume does not, however, address the role of national imagery intelligence in the war produced by either stealth drones¹ or satellites,² which were both emerging in the early 1960s as critical sources of intelligence to Washington policymakers. Those national assets are often celebrated today as the "top secret" and "untold" stories of the Cold War era that laid the foundation of modern technical intelligence.³

By contrast, Kenneth Jack's narrow focus on the RF-8 Crusader's tactical intelligence contributions to spotting surface-to-air missile (SAM) sites and conducting bomb damage assessments (BDA) is an inspirational examination of the personal sacrifices that "Unarmed, Unescorted, and Unafraid" (p. xxx) pilots made throughout the war. In close proximity to danger, these carrier-based Navy pilots gave up life and liberty to acquire tactical photo intelligence over enemy territory at the very juncture of the U.S. government introducing drones, higher-altitude aircraft, and space-borne reconnaissance to reduce the inherent risks of manned missions.⁴ The book should remain a reminder that, despite decades of growth in long standoff reconnaissance and the commonplace nature of high-resolution satellite imagery on phones and car navigation systems, the need continues for tactical intelligence from piloted aircraft still operating from aircraft carriers.⁵

The book also adds a general understanding in the evolution of what may now be referenced as multidisciplinary intelligence (multi-INT). Through U.S. Navy pilot recollections of flying photo-reconnaissance missions in concert with electronic warfare planes, such as the Marine EF-10B Skynight, the reader gains familiarity with early examples of how these technical intelligence sources complement one another in combat, albeit still told from the primary perspective of the men who made it possible rather than through the success of particular intelligence methods. From the fall of 1965, coordination between *Iron Hand* electronic intelligence and photo missions supported the larger *Rolling Thunder* bombing campaign of North Vietnam by identifying Soviet-constructed SA-2 SAM sites or radar-controlled anti-aircraft artillery for destruction (pp. 19-23). The intelligence success of that coordination takes a backseat to the author's diligent focus on the personal impacts to the pilots who braved barrage fire, technical mishaps, shootdowns, and enemy capture to collect such tactical intelligence.

Exemplary of the value readers will find in this volume are ten pages of the second chapter dedicated entirely to the personal memoir of Captain Charles Klusmann, who piloted the first VFP-63 photographic squadron RF-8 Crusader shot down over Laos and became a prisoner of war (later rescued) (pp. 26-36). Another ten pages at the end of Chapter 3 are similarly dedicated *in memoriam* to VFP-63 squadron losses during 1965 (pp. 61-71). Chapters 4 through 7 further capture accounts of heroism, close calls, rescue operations, and mishaps that detail the personal danger of acquiring intelligence from the air, each ending with memorials to men lost.

Beyond the skies, Jack also expends significant pages to the stories of aircraft maintainers, photomates like himself, and the intelligence compartments aboard aircraft carriers, all of which were required to make the collection, processing, and analysis