



Air Warriors: The Inside Story of the Making of a Navy Pilot

Douglas Waller

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Veteran journalist Douglas Waller, who wrote *The Commandos* after observing the training of special forces soldiers, chronicles his rare and intimate experience with the training program for Navy pilots in *Air Warriors*. Waller, who was granted permission to participate in the pilots' grueling training regime, has written an absorbing behind-the-scenes account of the physical and psychological trials endured by the most specialized group of pilots in military history.

From his bird's-eye view in the passenger's seat, Waller follows pilot trainees through two years of intense preparation. He offers vivid illustrations from the fray: hair-raising aerial dogfights; stomach-swallowing dive-bombing runs; highspeed tactical maneuvers grazing the desert floor; and numerous nerve-twisting aircraft carrier takeoffs and landings. In addition to his own experiences and those of the group of trainees he joins, his research is based on interviews with hundreds of other students and their instructors. Hurling through the air at death-defying speeds, these pilots-in-training struggle to maintain their composure while withstanding conditions that are designed to challenge them to the very limits of human endurance.

Waller's deftly drawn portraits of the men and women he encounters in this singular culture of elite pilots are as satisfying as his adventure narrative. The pilots, whose grit, determination, and mental agility operate on an elevated threshold, come into sharp focus behind Waller's keen lens: their aspirations, awe inspiring. *Air Warriors* combines an examination of the modern Navy, recovering from past sex scandals, with a portrayal of a privileged cadre of men and women whose ambition and commitment coexist within a tightly knit group. Waller is able to capture images of these pilots training, living, and fighting with an acuity and intelligence that are often absent from Hollywood and television treatments of this diverse and fascinating subculture. *Air Warriors* takes the reader for the first time inside the cockpit and behind closed doors for the real story of the making of a Navy pilot.

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