

The Ravens: The Men Who Flew in America's Secret War in Laos

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Drawing on materials that were, until recently, classified, this account depicts the intense air war fought over Laos and profiles the "Ravens," the pilots who risked their lives in this little-known field of war.

The Ravens were American forward air-controllers who directed strikes from vulnerable, low-flying spotter planes, mainly in support of a Meo general named Vang Pao in Laos. "Advised" by the CIA, this fierce warlord fought to keep the North Vietnamese out of the strategic Plain of Jars. Robbins (Air America) conveys the unique flavor of Raven-style combat and also explains how the diplomatic-military dynamics of the clandestine war in Laos fit into the overall American effort in Southeast Asia. The cast of characters is memorable: a swaggering, rowdy bunch of mavericks whom their parent service (the U.S. Air Force) had great difficulty controlling, they seemed to get by on sheer cussedness. According to the author, they suffered the highest casualty rate of the Indochinese War. Robbins describes the poignant plight of displaced Meo/Hmong tribespeople who have settled uneasily in the United States including General Pao and their ongoing struggle to "propitiate the alien spirits of America." Photos.

Copyright 1987 Reed Business Information, Inc. In 1961-75 the CIA ran a secret war in Laos, using Hmong tribesmen and covert U.S. Air Force air support. Ravens, USAF forward air controllers (FACs), flew low and slow over the battlefields, calling in air strikes on North Vietnamese soldiers. These men exposed themselves to every sort of risk. Robbins provides a detailed, readable account, with ample history and background to provide context. He is critical of U.S. military strategy and command, generally dismissive of extravagant claims against the CIA, and partial to the FACs. Likely to be popular with military buffs. Military Book Club main; Literary Guild alternate. Edwin B. Burgess, U.S. Army TRALINET Ctr., Fort Monroe, Va.

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Other Books

Raven's Flight to Freedom. This is the story of my survival, adventures, experiences, and insights about geopolitics and changing worldviews from before World War II Lithuania to Soviet occupation and my escape and evasion through wartime in Displaced- Persons Camp in Kempten, Germany for four years and my immigration to the United States of America in 1949. Five years later, having graduated from the Citadel Military College, I was commissioned as a Second Lieutenant and a BS Degree. (later acquired MS from U. of Dayton and Dr. from U. of Southern California) in the US Air Force and participated in the Cold War as combat crew member of Strategic Air Command's Bombers B-52 and B-58. Then I had a stint with research and development of F-111 weapons systems at Wright Air Development Center and about a year in Southeast Asian war (Vietnam) with an F-111 fighter-bomber detachment. Then I went back to Europe on an US AF project. Finally, after twenty-two years, I retired from the Air Force to Southern California and worked in the aerospace industry and had new experiences and insights about men's venture into the cosmos. However, after the dissolution of Soviet Union, the old country of Lithuania became free, and I went there to help rebuild the country and pay my debt to it by consulting the General Staff and teaching at the Military Academy there. there are more insights and adventures. Finally, I retire to cool my heels in the warm waters of the Pacific Rim in Southern California's Rancho Palos Verdes as a freelance writer.

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