

REFORM AND EXPERIMENTATION AFTER THE COLD WAR 1989–2001



*R*eform and Experimentation after the Cold War, the fifth volume in the series History of Acquisition in the Department of Defense, focuses on the adoption in the 1990s of new concepts and methods for acquiring major weapon systems. The changes came from several quarters—the White House, the Office of the Secretary of Defense, the military services, and Congress—and in response to numerous pressures. The most important of these were the end of the Cold War and the resulting decline in defense spending; advances in weapons technology, especially information technology; and the widespread belief the acquisition system was failing to deliver the weapon systems the nation needed, when it needed them, and at a cost it was willing to pay. Both President George H. W. Bush and President William J. “Bill” Clinton made correcting acquisition’s perceived weaknesses a high priority.

Reforms affected the acquisition system from top to bottom. They aimed primarily at decreasing the time required to develop and field advanced weapon systems while reducing their cost. They also sought to strengthen acquisition management and organizations, improve the quality and professionalism of the acquisition workforce, forge new relationships with the defense industry, and tap the commercial economy for leading-edge technologies, innovative business practices, and finished products suitable for military systems. Despite the many changes enacted during the 1990s, key decades-long trends continued: reliance on technologically superior weapons to gain advantage over potential opponents, centralization of acquisition management in the Office of the Secretary of Defense, and pressure from Congress for greater oversight.

The book’s in-depth case studies of major weapon system programs illustrate how acquisition functioned, particularly in adapting to reforms. Applied to systems differing widely with respect to function, degree of technological risk, stability of program funding, and projected acquisition cycle times, reforms sometimes succeeded, sometimes failed, and sometimes had no impact on program outcomes. Taken as a whole, however, the reforms made the acquisition community better able to adopt innovations and best practices from the private sector, more responsive to the users of systems, and more capable of designing policies, organizations, and procedures to address the security threats of the new century.

Front cover: Predator UAV; USS *Illinois*, a Virginia-class fast-attack submarine

Back cover: C-17 Globemaster III transport; V-22 Osprey tiltrotor aircraft; Crusader self-propelled 155-millimeter howitzer prototype

PHILIP L. SHIMAN
ELLIOTT V. CONVERSE III
JOSEPH A. ARENA

HISTORICAL OFFICE
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
OF DEFENSE

About the Authors

Philip L. Shiman, a consultant and contractor in military history, holds a bachelor's degree from Yale and a doctorate in history from Duke University. He is coauthor of *Strategic Computing: DARPA and the Quest for Machine Intelligence, 1983–1993* (2002) and author of *Forging the Sword: Defense Production during the Cold War* (1997). He has served as a senior analyst in Navy and Marine Corps history and technology for Anteon Corporation's Center for Security Strategy and Operations and has collaborated with National Park Service historians to develop a new approach to Civil War battlefield analysis. He has also worked for the Army Staff at the Pentagon and conducted history-based training at the U.S. Marine Corps Command and Staff College.

Elliott V. Converse III, a retired Air Force colonel with a doctorate in history from Princeton University, is the author of *Rearming for the Cold War, 1945–1960* (2012), the first volume in the defense acquisition history series. He has authored, coauthored, or edited other books on military history, including *The Exclusion of Black Soldiers from the Medal of Honor in World War II* (coauthor, 1997). While in the Air Force, he served as an intelligence officer in Thailand during the Vietnam War, a faculty member at the U.S. Air Force Academy and the Air War College, a strategic planner with the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and commander of the Air Force Historical Research Agency.

Joseph A. Arena is the Senior Historian, Leadership Support, for the Historical Office, Office of the Secretary of Defense. He received master's and doctoral degrees in history from The Ohio State University and a bachelor's degree with majors in history and political science from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. He is writing a history of cybersecurity policy in the Department of Defense.

