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Wings Over Ogaden: The Ethiopianâ€™Somali War, 1978â€™1979 (Africa @ War Series)



Synopsis

With Ethiopia in disarray following a period of severe internal unrest and the spread of insurgencies in Eritrea and Tigray, Ethiopia and its armed forces should have offered little opposition to well-equipped Somali armed forces which were unleashed to capture Ogaden, in July 1977. However, excellently trained pilots of the Ethiopian Air Force took full advantage of their US-made equipment, primarily their few brand-new Northrop F-5E Tiger II fighter-bombers, to take the fight to their opponents, win air superiority over the battlefield, and thus have their hands free to interdict the Somali supply links to stop the invasion cold. This air victory practically sealed the fate of the Somali juggernaut in Ogaden, especially so once Ethiopia convinced Cuba and the Soviet Bloc to support her instead of Somalia. In a fit of pique, Somalia forced all Soviet advisers to leave the country. Already bitter over similar experiences in Egypt in 1972, Moscow's revenge was designed as a clear message: nobody was to treat her in such fashion again. The USSR subsequently launched an air bridge to Ethiopia, unique and unprecedented in its extension and importance, delivering huge quantities of armament and equipment necessary for the Ethiopians to reconquer Ogaden, and beyond. In turn Somalia asked the USA for help and thus occurred an unprecedented switch of Cold War alliances. This volume details the history and training of both Ethiopian and Somali air forces, their equipment and training, tactics used and kills claimed, against the backdrop of the flow of the Ogaden war. It explains in detail, supported by over 100 contemporary and exclusive photographs, maps and color profiles, how the Ethiopian Air Force won the decisive victory in the air by expertly deploying the F-5Es - unequaled in maneuverability, small size and powerful armament - to practically destroy the Somali Air Force and its MiG-17s and MiG-21s.

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Customer Reviews

Copper's treatment is concise and informative. This book is packed with photographs and color plates. While the book deals mainly with the air war (as you would expect from the title), Cooper also provides coverage of the land battles and politics (photos of armor, infantry and some OOBs). Can't recommend this book enough.

The little-known Ogaden war between Ethiopia and Somalia in 1977-78 was notable for more than the outcome of border dispute. In aviation circles, Ethiopia's seemingly outmatched Northrop F-5s handily mastered the Somali MiG-21s, proving yet again the primacy of pilot training over hardware. While the Ethiopian Air Force was small by any measure, its fighter pilots enjoyed an unusually high standard of training, benefiting from years of experience in the United States. As Tom Cooper ably demonstrates, the Northrop Tigers scored at least 11-0 against their faster, presumably more capable enemies, and undoubtedly the tally was significantly higher because the Ethiopians did not credit "maneuver kills" or the dramatic results of Somali mistakes. Though the focus is on aviation, Cooper does an excellent job of placing the air war in context of the overall situation. It is no easy task, given the confusing geo-strategic situation with rapidly-shifting alliances. At the end, the Soviets gave up on their nominal Somali allies and established a massive airlift to sustain, then expand, Ethiopia's military capability. Cuban military personnel, including pilots, also were engaged on Ethiopia's side, leading to a smorgasbord of aircraft types and markings for Western historians and buffs to sort out. "Wings Over Ogaden" serves as a model of persistent research and determined digging in an obscure but intriguing subject. Thank goodness for Tom Cooper and ACIG.org. Without them, our knowledge of military aviation history would be far less complete.

A well written, in depth work chronicling the air aspect of the Ogaden War between Ethiopia and Somalia. An excellent resource on a little known and understood conflict.

Good detailed coverage of the air war, with surprising informative look at the ground campaign as well. All together a nice read, but teases me enough overall on this little known war that I wanted to learn even more.

The other reviews are more than adequate to describe this book. A very welcome addition to my library.

This book was one of the best books covering this conflict I have read. Book has the history behind the conflict and the types of aircraft used. Lots of color pictures and detail color drawings. Do not be confused by the title this book goes into great detail about the ground campaign also. After reading I was impressed by both sides and their fighting abilities.

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