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United States. *The Tailhook Report: The Official Inquiry into the Events of Tailhook '91.* New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993. xiv + 250 pp. $10.95 (paper), ISBN 978-0-312-10329-3.

Reviewed by J. Michael Brower (Georgetown University)
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Professional Reading

(Note: The Office of the Inspector General is the internal investigative arm of the Secretary of Defense.)

As the primary public source for details of the 1991 Tailhook Convention scandal, this book demands renewed attention. The report emphasizes that a basic paradigm shift is required in the ethical superstructure of the Navy. Ostensibly an opportunity for analysis of Navy aviation methods, successes and lesson learned, the daytime agenda of the 35th annual convention attended by over 4,000 people seemed innocuous enough. But the after-hours events are what made headlines and are still in the spotlight after two years. Written in a clinical style (the discretion displayed by the Inspector General's office is indeed noteworthy) most of the details of the evening events of September 5-8, 1991 in Las Vagas, defy euphemistic presentation. But the report opens with a most disarming letter from Derek J. Vander Schaaf, the Deputy Inspector General. He discusses the scope and methodology of the investigating teams. Indecent assaults, exposure, conduct unbecoming an officer, leadership failure and false statements were uncovered through an intensive interview process. A host of important issues actually do get addressed mainly through these interviews. The IG's praiseworthy anxiety to obtain the facts and finish the probe reveals an attempt at fair play. The convention was conducted in an atmosphere of victorious celebration (Desert Storm) but the prospect of new, harsh military cut-backs, together with the suspicion that women would make new inroads in aviation under the new administration at the expense of the male elite, culminated in an atmosphere of resentment against females, the investigators theorized. There were signs of "contempt for women in naval aviation and, specifically the desire to maintain the combat exclusion with regard to women," the investigators observe. The inquiry indicates that this is the kernel of the entire affair. If we can conclude nothing else from the Tailhook tragedy, it is that we must solemnly declare, never again.

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