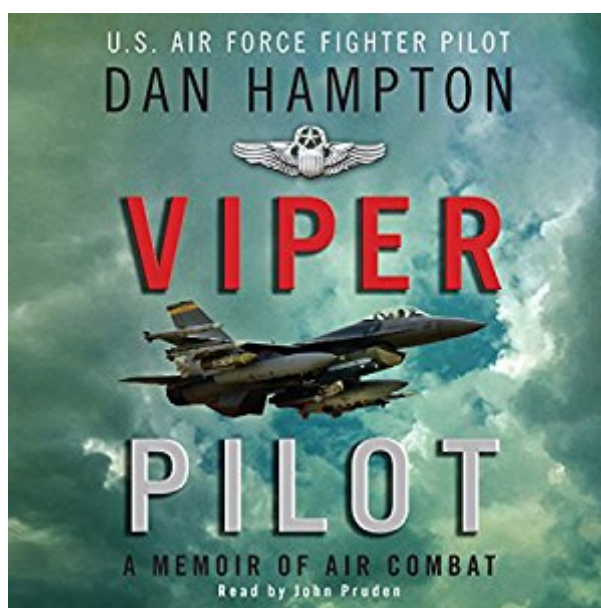


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Viper Pilot: The Autobiography Of One Of America's Most Decorated Combat Pilots



Synopsis

151 combat missions 21 hard kills on surface-to-air-missile sites Four Distinguished Flying Crosses with Valor One Purple Heart Sure to rank as one of the greatest aviation memoirs ever written, *Viper Pilot* is an Air Force legend's thrilling eyewitness account of modern air warfare. From 1986 to 2006, Lt. Col. Dan Hampton was a leading member of the Wild Weasels, the elite Air Force fighter squadrons whose mission is recognized as the most dangerous job in modern air combat. Weasels are the first planes sent into a war zone, flying deep behind enemy lines purposely seeking to draw fire from surface-to-air missiles and artillery. They must skillfully evade being shot down - and then return to destroy the threats, thereby making the skies safe for everyone else to follow. Today these vital missions are more hazardous than direct air-to-air engagement with enemy aircraft. Hampton's record number of strikes on high-value targets make him the most lethal F-16 Wild Weasel pilot in American history. This is his remarkable story. Taught to fly at an early age by his father, Hampton logged twenty years and 608 combat hours in the world's most iconic fighter jet: the F-16 "Fighting Falcon", or "Viper" as its pilots call it. Hampton spearheaded the 2003 invasion of Iraq, leading the first flight of fighters over the border en route to strike Baghdad. In the war that followed, he engaged in a series of brilliantly executed missions that earned him three Distinguished Flying Crosses with Valor; he notably saved a U.S. Marine unit from certain death by taking out the surrounding enemy forces near Nasiriyah. Two years earlier, on 9/11, Hampton's father was inside the Pentagon when it was attacked; with his dad's fate unknown, Hampton was scrambled into American skies and given the unprecedented orders to shoot down any unidentified aircraft. Hampton also flew critical missions in the first Gulf War, served on the Air Combat Command staff during the Kosovo War, and was injured in the 1996 Khobar Towers terrorist attack. With manned missions rapidly giving way to remote-controlled UAV drones, *Viper Pilot* may be the last memoir by a true hero of the skies. Gripping and irreverently humorous, it is an unforgettable look into the closed world of fighter pilots and modern air combat.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This is an outstanding book. It will take you into the cockpit of a single-seat F16 fighter, both technically and emotionally. USAF fighter pilots undergo a series of selection processes that is as much psychological as physical, progressively skimming off the best of the best, followed by a regimen of intense training and evaluation that never stops. Pilots of the F-16, nicknamed the Viper, were at the pinnacle. Hampton can also write. He takes you into his mind as well as the cockpit, strapped down and festooned with gear, for a strenuous eight-hour ordeal with five mid-air refuelings, attacking ground targets and dodging ground-based missiles: just one mission of many. He doesn't pretend he is fearless; he forces himself against all instinct to act as though he is. In one instance he admits that despite his cockiness his breathing matches his pulse rate. A few prior reviews have criticized the writer for arrogance. Not so. Machismo, yes. His book knocks non-pilots, other pilots, foreign pilots. As an ex-fighter pilot in the RAF I'd say that's how fighter pilots are, and you're supposed to get it. Still, he knows he and his comrades are insufferable. In an episode in the Officers' Club between missions, charged with "testosterone, adrenaline, and alcohol," he portrays himself as a jerk who gets dressed down by a more senior, battle-hardened fighter pilot. So if you can sink yourself into this book you will have an experience. But don't expect Lt. Colonel Hampton, the USAF's most decorated F16 pilot -- with twenty years' service, 151 combat missions in Iraq, Kosovo, and the first Gulf War, 21 kills, 12 medals, and a Purple Heart, to be a shrinking violet.

Col. Hampton has my upmost respected and gratitude for his outstanding service to our country, however he seems to have the atypical ego and bravado of most AF pilots and very little respect for those who are not fighter pilots. Through out his ,see how good I am, narratives and railings about fighter pilots superior education, abilities and other lesser attributes he continues to belittle other AF pilots, Staff and support elements he has to deal with. Having experienced combat at a much closer range, i.e. 100 yds. 24/7 vs 5000 ft. at 500 mph, for 2 hrs. I take exception to a number of his egotistical statements regarding fighter pilots compared to us lesser beings. But one statement I take very personally is his assumption that in no other human endeavor, except for being a fighter

pilot, would another human willing give up his life to save his brother. There are HEROES through all of the services and all the wars we have fought that have without hesitation done exactly that. Some have been rewarded with medals and others have gone unrecognized. The United States Air Forces is, without doubt, the best in the world and I can truthfully say they saved our butts on several occasions, however I would ask Col. Hampton when was the last time fighter pilots secured, defended, and held their own airfield. The Col. might want to reflect on the cost and sacrifices made to secure the real estate he and his Prima Donnas set their arses down on! Semper FI, Kenneth Meier USMC Korea 1951.

Hampton writes in an easygoing, accessible style, peppered with appropriate doses of fighter pilot bravado. Frequently funny and brandishing an "Murica damnit" sense of humor, I did enjoy this book. If I had one criticism it would be how the depictions of various strike missions tend to blur together. When you are reading your fourth or fifth description of an air-to-ground strike on a surface-to-air missile site, it's nigh impossible for the average reader to keep track of what's north, south, east and west, up, down, who's inverted and who's not. I am not sure how to correct this flaw except to dial back on the (in some cases) excruciating level of detail.

I do not like to read, but I finished this book in one sitting. Even without having read many books of the same genre, I seriously doubt there is any better account of the modern-day Wild Weasel fighter pilot. If you want to know what it's like to fly a fighter in combat today, read this book. If you might be offended by real language, spoken opinions, and the true danger of aerial combat, then buy the book, read it, and have your eyes opened a bit. The detail of LtCol Hampton's accounts is impressive and accurate. Like most significant emotional events in life, combat is hard to explain. Every person who has been in harm's way has his or her own individual experience. Each experience is just as difficult to convey as the next, but LtCol Hampton has done an excellent job of bringing us to the fight, and feeling like we are on his wing. I WAS on his wing, a lot, and as an FNG, I'm glad I was. This is an excellent book written by a talented pilot. I am writing this review for the book, but I would rank 2Dogs just as high as a pilot and leader. Yes, he is confident, yes he has pissed people off, and yes his book is all about HIS experiences. Average guys with uneventful lives who please everyone usually don't have much of a story to tell. Those guys can be found down in the 1-star area of this book's reviews. Go ahead, read all their opinions, but then see for yourself and form your own opinion about 2Dog's story. Trust me, Viper Pilot will not disappoint.

Flying has always been a dream of mine and did have a brief stint some years ago. But Dan Hampton takes flying into a high rung of resourcefulness to attain air wings of flyers that make our world safer. Although the book is a riveting adventure into a technical flying machine that perhaps someone should be predestined to achieve. These flying machines are not for everyone as they depend on a sophisticated individual that must be intuitive, super intelligent, and psychologically fit. Dan Hampton takes you into the seat of his F-16 machine for hours on end and thrills you with his skills and endurance to do battle and to lead his fellow wingmen to victory. A wonderful experience for anyone wanting to know what goes on inside the canopy of these super airmen.

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