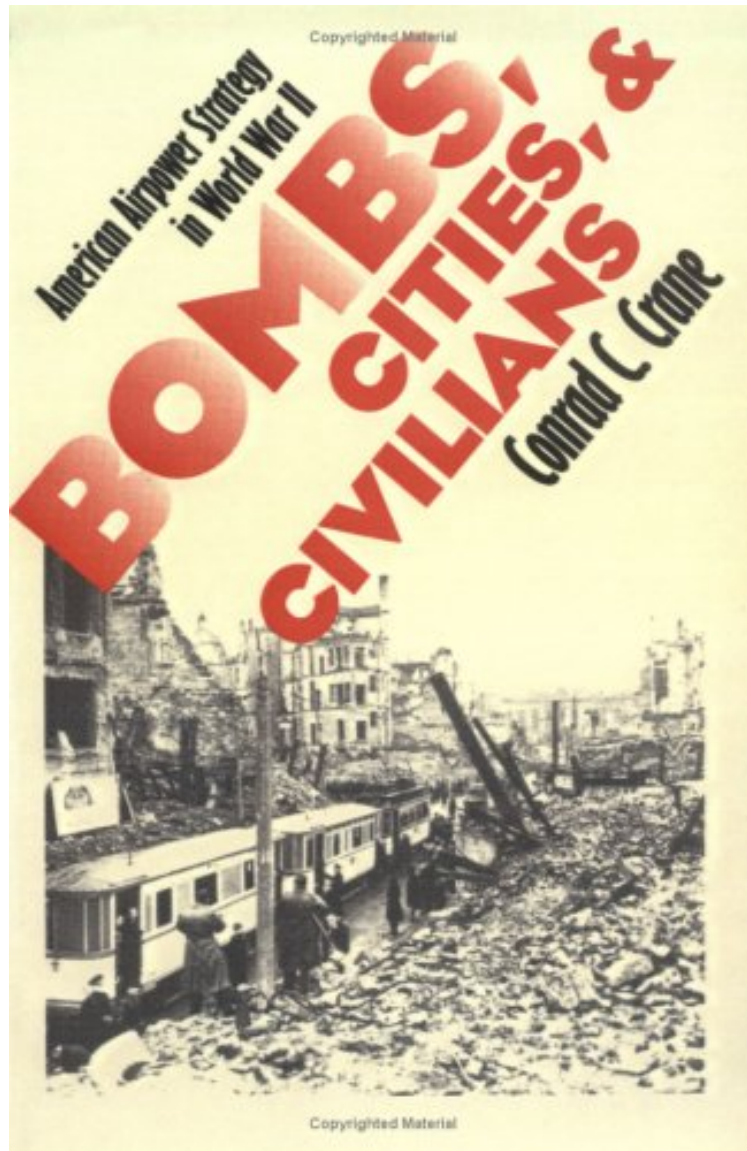


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## **Bombs, Cities, and Civilians: American Airpower Strategy in World War II (Modern War Studies)**

*Conrad C. Crane*

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0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Very interesting view of the theories and application of air ...By CustomerVery interesting view of the theories and application of air power in World War 2. Brief read, but informative. A little light on Pacific theater conflict, but that is mostly because the book focuses more on the Army and Air Force than the Navy. 7 of 7 people found the following review helpful. Review of Bombs, Cities, CiviliansBy Charles G. KjosThis is not an action-packed blow-by-blow account of battles, it's about U.S. WW II bombing strategy -- the most analytical, insightful, source material based book I've read in my admittedly limited WW II reading. The author is a real scholar -- I'll be passing this book to friends and reading other books by the author. 11 of 12 people found the following review helpful. an informative account of the air warBy 1. According to Crane, Allied air commanders in Europe prioritized accuracy while General LeMay valued the psychological aspects of deliberately targeting civilians. American commanders such as Spaatz advocated precision bombing even if it meant greater casualties. Crane writes that civilian casualties became more acceptable when the Army Airforce began bombing transportation targets in Europe and thereby incurring greater civilian casualties. Plus both Fifteenth and Eighth airforces began using radar directed bombing practices that were less accurate. General LeMay completely ignored the accuracy doctrine and started to deliberately bomb civilian areas. The aim of LeMay's strategy was to shock the Japanese to surrender. Crane concludes his book by writing about the mediocre record of strategic bombing since the Second World War. Bombing was ineffective against preindustrialized countries such as North Korea and Vietnam, but was effective in shocking Iraq ground soldiers to surrender in the Gulf War. The only weakness of this book is that Crane ignored close air support doctrine within the airforce. But if one wants to study about the American bombing campaigns this is a highly informative study.

As the might and capabilities of American airpower have grown during the last sixty years, so has the controversy about its use in the intentional and indiscriminate wartime bombardment of civilians. In *Bombs, Cities, and Civilians*, Conrad Crane maintains that, for the most part, American airmen in World War II remained committed to precision bombing doctrine. Instead of attacking densely populated urban areas simply to erode civilian morale, Army Air Forces adhered to a policy that emphasized targeting key industrial and military sites. He demonstrates that while the British, Germans, and Japanese routinely conducted indiscriminate aerial bombardment of enemy cities, American airmen consistently stayed with daylight raids against carefully selected targets, especially in Europe. Daytime precision missions were usually far more dangerous than night area attacks, but such Army Air Force tactics increased bombing efficiency and also reduced the risk of civilian casualties. This is the first book to respond to recent assertions by other historians that due to military necessity, vague policies, or the desire to maximize technology, Army Air Forces bombers in World War II exercised little restraint on attacks against civilians. Even though bombing policy was influenced more by the attitudes of airmen in operations rooms and in combat than by directives from leaders in Washington, Crane contends that air commanders in the field did consistently conform to the guidelines of precision doctrine. Crane also shows, however, that different leaders, command arrangements, and combat conditions in the Pacific led to bombing policies that were much less discriminating concerning target selection. Focusing on specific operations and key operational commanders, such as Carl Spaatz in Europe and Curtis LeMay in the Pacific, he illustrates how different situations and personalities influenced bombing policies. Despite deviations from precision bombing doctrine in the Pacific that led to incendiary raids on Japanese cities, Crane contends that the pursuit of accurate bombing remained a primary goal throughout World War II and remains one today. Beginning with the lessons gleaned from World War I, he traces the evolution of American doctrine and technology for conventional bombing through the wars in Korea, Vietnam, and the Persian Gulf. In the process, he demonstrates how public opinion, combat conditions, technological innovation, and the search for "Victory through Airpower" have affected bombing operations and military policy.

"Crane raises two very important questions in this well-researched and finely argued study: why did discussions on the atomic-bomb policy in 1944–1945 not focus on whether or not to use it, and second, to what extent can moral restraints be effective in war? He tackles these questions as an experienced army officer who understands the tactical and technological forces which drive operational decision-making in contrast to high policy emanating from the capital's politicians and military administrators."—Robin Higham, author of *Air Power: A Concise History* "A carefully researched, thoroughly objective analysis of the moral dimensions of strategic bombardment."—I. B. Holley, Jr., author of *General John Palmer, Citizen Soldiers and the Army* "Crane entered this study without the presumption of guilt so common among recent studies of strategic bombing. This book provides us with some much needed balance to our understanding of the moral dimensions of planning and conducting air operations in the support of our national policy."—David R. Mets, author of *Master of Airpower: General Carl A. Spaatz* "Well researched and well written, this book makes excellent use of both primary and secondary sources. In the field of strategic bombing, it is comparable with the key books of the last decade: Schaffer, Sherry, and Overy."—Kenneth P. Werrell, author of *The Evolution of the Cruise Missile* From the Back Cover "Crane raises two very important questions in this well-researched and finely argued study--why did discussions on the atomic-bomb policy in 1944-1945 not focus on

whether or not to use it, and second, to what extent can moral restraints be effective in war? He tackles these questions as an experienced army officer who understands the tactical and technological forces which drive operational decision-making in contrast to high policy emanating from the capital's politicians and military administrators."--Robin Higham, author of *Air Power: A Concise History* "A carefully researched, thoroughly objective analysis of the moral dimensions of strategic bombardment."--I. B. Holley, Jr., author of *General John Palmer, Citizen Soldiers and the Army* "Crane entered this study without the presumption of guilt so common among recent studies of strategic bombing. This book provides us with some much needed balance to our understanding of the moral dimensions of planning and conducting air operations in the support of our national policy."--David R. Mets, author of *Master of Airpower: General Carl A. Spaatz* "Well researched and well written, this book makes excellent use of both primary and secondary sources. In the field of strategic bombing, it is comparable with the key books of the last decade: Schaffer, Sherry, and Overy."--Kenneth P. Werrell, author of *The Evolution of the Cruise Missile* About the Author Conrad C. Crane is professor of history at the United States Military Academy and the author of *American Airpower Strategy in Korea, 1950-1953*.