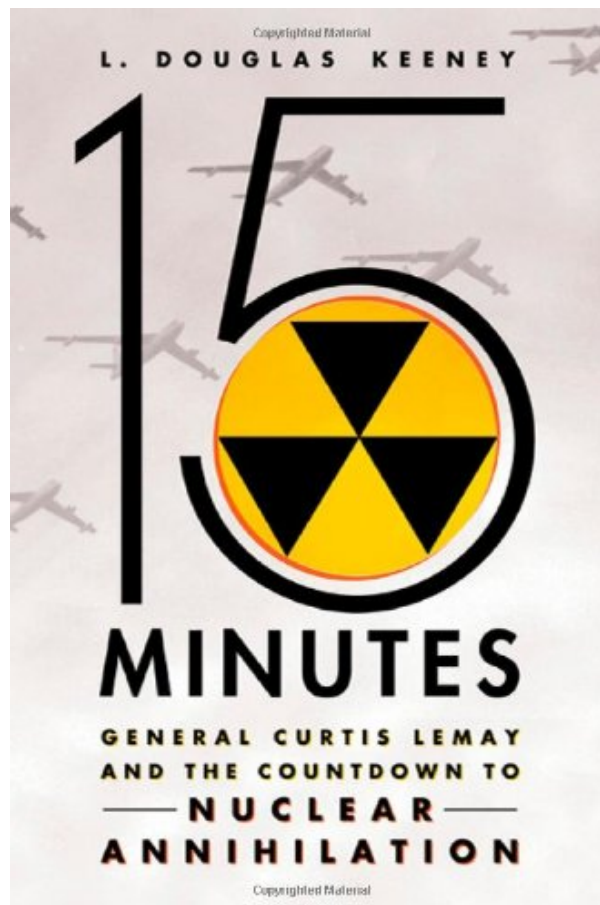
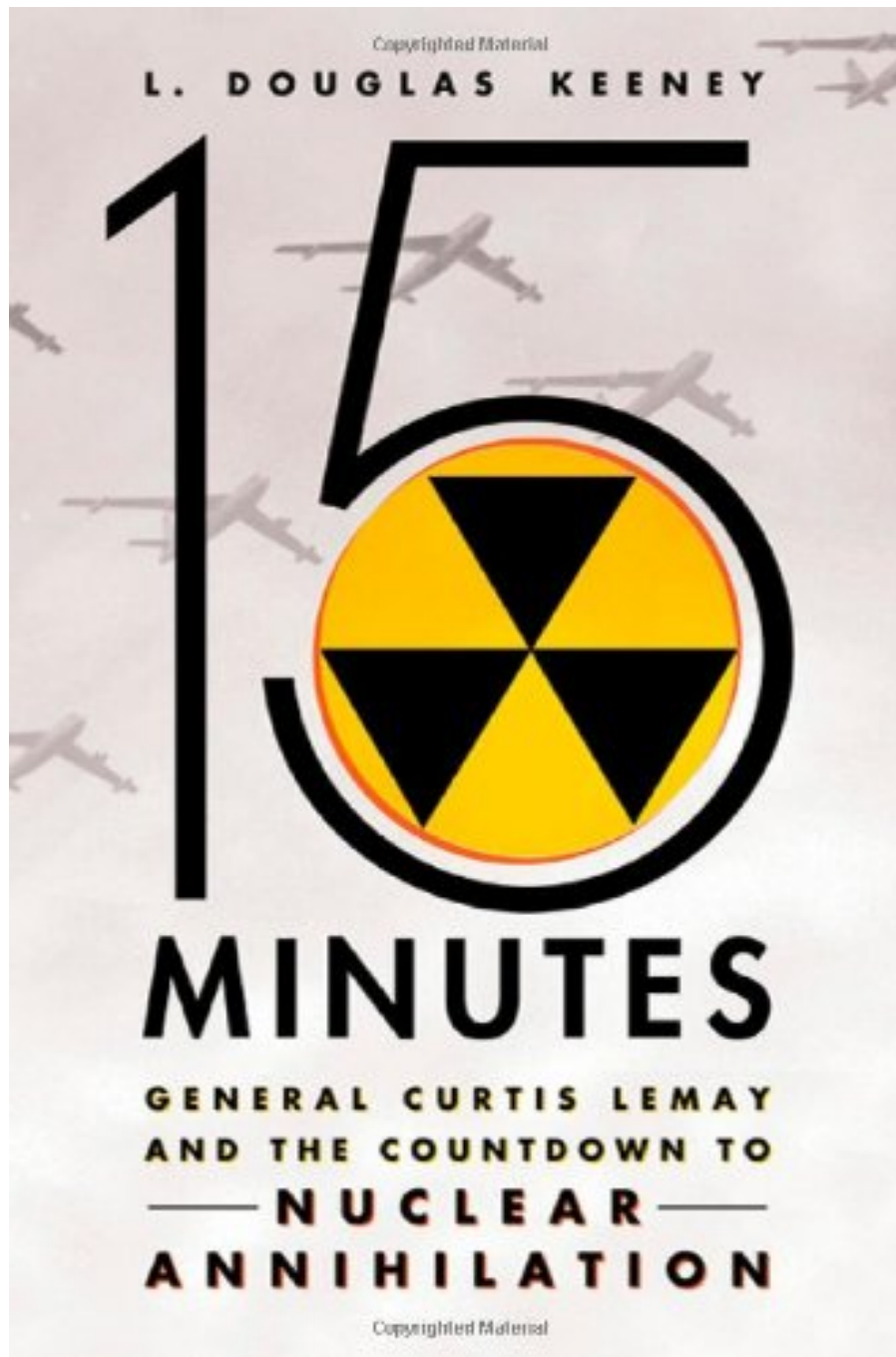


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AND THE COUNTDOWN TO NUCLEAR
ANNIHILATION BY L. DOUGLAS KEENEY**



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Packed with startling revelations, this inside look at the secret side of the Cold War exposes just how close America came to total annihilation

During the Cold War, a flight crew had 15 minutes to get their nuke-laden plane in the air from the moment Soviet bombers were detected--15 minutes between the earliest warning of an incoming nuclear strike and the first flash of an enemy warhead. This is the chilling true story of the incredibly risky steps our military took to protect us from that scenario, including:

- Over two thousand loaded bombers that crossed American skies. They sometimes crashed and at least nine times resulted in nuclear weapons being accidentally dropped
- A system that would use timers and rockets to launch missiles even after everyone was dead
- Disastrous atmospheric nuclear testing including the horrific runaway bomb--that fooled scientists and put thousands of men in uniform in the center of a cloud of hot fallout
- A plan to use dry lake beds to rebuild and launch a fighting force in the aftermath of nuclear war

Based on formerly classified documents, military records, press accounts, interviews and over 10 years of research, 15 Minutes is one of the most important works on the atom bomb ever written.

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67 of 72 people found the following review helpful.

Making sense of the Cold War chaos.

By Donald Farmer

Keeney's book was a bit perplexing at first but the point he makes well is that there was more chaos during the Cold War than anyone could imagine. So he jumps from wave heights to thermonuclear discoveries to SAC penetration tactics in a way that makes you feel the confusion and chaos, as if you were there. Well, I was there. Like Keeney says we all had Emergency War Plans -- and as a Cold War fighter pilot and tanker pilot I saw many sides of the situation, I can say that we were ready to go. Reading this well and exhaustively researched, well written book I can say that Keeney introduces declassified documents in a way that brings the reality of our Cold War to life in a way I could never before share with my family. I'm buying copies for my in-laws! Hooray!

56 of 60 people found the following review helpful.

The Rise and Fall of the Strategic Air Command

By William Holmes

At first, I found the organization of "15 minutes" to be a little off putting--especially in the early going, the author describes a series of seemingly unrelated events in short, jarring paragraphs, many of which end in a somewhat melodramatic one-word teaser. Keeney does this to set up several different stories at once, which is why you'll wonder why the second paragraph in the chapter on "1945" is about the development of offshore oil and gas drilling in Louisiana in 1907 (it makes sense eventually).

I suspect the book's style owes a lot to Keeney's experience with television documentary (he's a co-founder of The Military Channel), and it actually works fairly well as the book builds momentum. If the book's thesis is that things had to happen at a faster and faster pace to preserve a credible strategic deterrent, the book's short, punchy paragraphs do an effective job of conveying the sense of urgency that must have pervaded SAC

for nearly forty years.

"15 Minutes" tells several intertwined stories in parallel, each of which is interesting in its own right: the founding, growth and eventual demise of the US Strategic Air Command (SAC) (which dissolved on June 1, 1992); the development of the hydrogen bomb, the sometimes disastrous outcomes of nuclear "shots" and the surprisingly frequent near-detonation or loss of armed nuclear weapons (including one still missing near Savannah, Georgia); the deployment of the Distant Early Warning (DEW) line and associated deep water radar facilities, one of which was destroyed by a rogue wave that killed its crew in January 1961; the ruthless but effective vision of General Curtis LeMay, who created a force so demanding and disciplined that "[n]ot for the thinnest fraction of a second did Washington or Moscow ever doubt that his SAC would do what it said it could do" (p.320); and the descent of SAC into irrelevance as a strategic deterrent, as more and more nuclear weapons were deployed on missiles and SAC assets were "degraded" to drop "iron bombs" on Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia.

All in all, "15 Minutes" is a pretty gripping narrative of the Cold War, deterrence, near misses, disasters and unsung heroes. Although there are a few jarring errors in the text, this is only a minor distraction from an otherwise well-told story that does a great service to the men and women who succeeded, against the odds, in keeping the Cold War cold.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful.

Very, very informative book. Written with professional detachment ...

By David Benjamin Williams

Very, very informative book. Written with professional detachment, "15 Minutes" clearly dissects the international and technological context of the Cold War. I discovered how much sacrifice was made by the men in the Air Force, from the sergeants to generals to keep this country safe. Many involved in the nuclear disarming groups no doubt were either unwilling or completely ignorant of the willingness of the Soviet Union to impose their will on the world stage by any means possible, including the use of nuclear and thermonuclear weapons. A little dry reading at times, but I could hardly put the book down. Well done and "Bravo Zulu."

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