It is more than 30 years since the original and highly acclaimed history of 2nd Tactical Air Force was first published, and it has been long out of print. This is a completely rewritten and greatly expanded account of this important command's vital contribution to the Invasion of Normandy and the defeat of the forces of the Third Reich in Western Europe. The 2nd Tactical Air Force, equipped with rocket- and bomb-carrying Typhoons, Tempests, Spitfires, Mosquitos, Mustangs and medium bombers, flew ground attack and tank-busting missions in support of Montgomery's 21st Army Group as it advanced through Normandy and northwest Europe in 1944-45. The medium bomber units struck at enemy transport, ammunition dumps and communication targets. The 2nd TAF comprised British, Canadian, Polish, Czech, Norwegian, French, South African, Australian and New Zealand crews. The first volume in this three-book set deals with the formation and expansion of 2nd TAF from its inception in June 1943 for the next 12 months, and with the initial critical month of the invasion. This volume, as with the two subsequent volumes, is not only profusely illustrated with many little known photographs, and with Chris Thomass masterly artwork, but also contains daily listings of all claims made against enemy aircraft, and all losses, damage and casualties suffered by 2nd Tactical aircraft and aircrews in carrying out their arduous duties.

My Personal Review:
At the beginning of World War II the Germans showed the world how a mixed arms unit of aircraft, tanks, artillery and infantry working together could smash anything that stood in its path. Unfortunately the British and the Americans were somewhat slow to learn such co-operation. Both the RAF and the US Army Air Force had a series of generals that believed that they could win the war without the rest of the military if only they got enough heavy bombers.
During the preparation before Overlord it was only with great effort that Eisenhower got them to assist in the invasion. They insisted on deep penetration raids into Germany rather than helping the ground forces. When finally ordered by higher command to assist they did so reluctantly and poorly. The beaches at Normandie were supposed to be riddled with so many bomb craters that no Germans were supposed to be left alive. Basically they missed all the beaches. Finally they were ordered to assist in the breakout from Normandy with Operation Cobra. They were to fly along a road and bomb only to the east of the road. Instead they flew across the road and the backward creap of the bombs fell on American troops. The highest ranking American general killed in the war, Lt. Gen. Lesley McNair was killed by such friendly fire. After that Eisenhower refused to use the heavy bombers again.

Instead, Eisenhower concentrated on the use of the smaller planes of the 2nd Tactical Air Force. This book is their story.

This is an absolutely beautiful book, profusely illustrated with hundreds of wartime photographs, most of which I've never seen before. Of particular interest to me were the pictures of the early Allison engined Mustang with its three bladed prop and greenhouse canopy, and of the Douglas A-20 (Boston/Havoc) bomber. Both of these were soon replaced by the Merlin engined Mustang and the A-26. But this volume of the book covers the time frame from June 1943 to June 1944, that's when these planes were in use.

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