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Taking Fire: Saving Captain Aikman A Story of the Vietnam Air War

American military special operations forces—Rangers, SEALs, and others—have become a well-recognized and highly respected part of our popular culture. But whom do these elite warriors look to in their times of greatest need?

They look skyward, hoping to catch a glimpse of their own personal guardian angel: a U.S. Air Force para rescue jumper (PJ) who lives, and sometimes dies, by the motto that others may live.

Taking Fire provides an up-close look into the heroism and mystique of this little known segment of the Air Force Special Tactics community by focusing on one of the most dramatic rescues of the Vietnam War.

On June 24, 1972, F-4 pilot, Captain Lynn Aikman, who only weeks earlier had kissed his wife and newborn daughter goodbye in the States, found himself lying on a jungle hillside, battered and slipping into unconsciousness, while dozens of hostile and armed militia closed on his location. Aikman's fate would be sealed by sundown.

Now on the ground and drifting in and out of consciousness, Captain Aikman looks up and suddenly sees his guardian angel in the form of USAF Para rescue Jumper Chuck McGrath. As Sergeant McGrath is preparing to hook the downed pilot to a hoist line, he sees it fall to the ground. Hostile fire on the

hovering Jolly Green Giant rescue helicopter has damaged the hoist mechanism causing the operator to cut the line. While circling A-1 Skyraiders strafe the militia to keep them away from Aikman and McGrath, the helicopter crew races to come up with a plan. It's getting dark, and they'll only have one chance.

This true account of one day in the Vietnam Conflict reveals the character and dedication of the Air Force search and rescue services in Southeast Asia. As the war's popularity waned in the United States, leading to political compromises that left the Air Force as the primary presence in Vietnam, flying high-risk missions over hundreds of miles of enemy territory, the men of search and rescue resolved to be the safety net for pilots flying deep into North Vietnam.

Taking Fire is an exciting, highly dramatic story of life and death over North Vietnam. Much more than a chronicle the events of 27 June 1972, the book gives the reader an up-close look at the little known world of the U.S. Air Force's elite aerial rescue force.

Taking Fire: Saving Captain Aikman: A Story of the Vietnam Air War

Kevin O'Rourke and Joe Peters, 6 x 9, 216 pages, 16 pp. photos, 9781612001265, \$32.95, hardback

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