



Victory on the Potomac: The Goldwater-Nichols Act Unifies the Pentagon (Williams-Ford Texas A&M University Military History Series)

James R. Locher III

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War is waged not only on battlefields. In the mid-1980s a high-stakes political struggle to redesign the relationships among the president, secretary of defense, Joint Chiefs of Staff, chairman of the Joint Chiefs, and warfighting commanders in the field resulted in the Goldwater-Nichols Act of 1986. Author James R. Locher III played a key role in the congressional effort to repair a dysfunctional military whose interservice squabbling had cost American taxpayers billions of dollars and put the lives of thousands of servicemen and women at risk. Victory on this front helped make possible the military successes the United States has enjoyed since the passage of the bill and to prepare it for the challenges it must still face. Victory on the Potomac provides the first detailed history of how Congress unified the Pentagon and does so with the benefit of an insider's view. In a fast-paced account that reads like a novel, Locher follows the bill through congressional committee to final passage, making clear that the process is neither abstract nor automatic. His vivid descriptions bring to life the amazing cast of this real-life drama, from the straight-shooting chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, Barry Goldwater, to the peevishly stubborn secretary of defense, Casper Weinberger. Locher's analysis of political maneuvering and bureaucratic infighting will fascinate anyone who has an interest in how government works, and his understanding of the stakes in military reorganization will make clear why this legislative victory meant so much to American military capability.

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