

THE LAW OF WAR

In 2015, the United States Department of Defense published its long-awaited *Law of War Manual*, making a significant statement on the position of the DoD on important military matters. While readers recognise the *Manual*'s legal and strategic importance, they may question whether particular statements of law are legally accurate or complete. This book offers a unique in-depth review of the complete *Manual*, including revisions, on a paragraph-by-paragraph, line-by-line and word-by-word basis. The authors offer their personal assessment of the DoD's declared view as to the law that regulates the conduct of warfare, a subject of unparalleled current importance. William H. Boothby and Wolff Heintschel von Heinegg offer a balanced, articulate and authoritative critique for readers perusing the *Manual* in whatever capacity.

William H. Boothby is an associate fellow at the Geneva Centre for Security Policy. A former Air Commodore, he retired as Deputy Director of Legal Services for the RAF in 2011.

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The Law of War

A DETAILED ASSESSMENT OF THE US DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE LAW OF WAR MANUAL

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To Monika and Katja





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Preface

The preparation of a commentary on a national military manual is a somewhat unique undertaking. That very aspect would cause most observers to ask why indeed would one wish to do it. When the *Manual* in question extends to approximately 1200 pages and addresses the law of war in very considerable detail, the question takes on added poignancy. Part at least of the answer lies in the fact that this is a military manual issued by no lesser an authority than the United States Department of Defense (US DoD). And yet the document does not describe itself as expressing the US national position on law of war matters. Indeed, the document makes it abundantly clear that the views expressed are those of the Department and may not necessarily be those of the US Government as a whole.

So, the reader starts to wonder what the legal status of the text is, and this very legal ambiguity was another factor that caused the present authors to contemplate writing this book. As we started to look at the different chapters, we noticed that there was much to praise but, also, elements that merited criticism. The idea started to form that a systematic, paragraph-by-paragraph commentary addressing all of the substantive provisions of the *Law of War Manual* and of the amendment documents should be prepared. There was never any doubt that this would be a considerable task.

It would be tempting to divide such a task among a significant number of authors, each of them taking on the review of a substantial but not overburdensome number of pages of text. That would not, however, have led to what the present authors were trying to produce, namely a text that reflects the kind of consistency of approach only normally to be achieved by means of very limited authorship. At the same time, what we wanted to write was an accessible, well-written commentary with which we both agreed, i.e. essentially a joint view. In short, there could be no shortcut. Both of us had to go



xx Preface

through the whole text in some detail, and the pages that follow are the result of that significant endeavour.

The aim throughout has been to give a balanced appraisal of what the *Manual* has to say. While criticism is offered where it is considered to be merited, praise is also forthcoming. Indeed, the most praiseworthy aspect of all is the very decision to publish a manual on this most complex, politically sensitive and controversial subject at all. That the Defense Department of a State of the military stature and global significance of the United States has been prepared to do so does much to take international understanding of the law of war forwards, and is thus to be regarded as an inherently good thing.

Undoubtedly there are improvements that could be made to the current text, and we have made suggestions throughout the book of where we consider such improvements might profitably be considered. The issuing of the two amendment sheets discussed at Chapter 20 indicates that the DoD is not averse to making such amendments where they are thought to be appropriate. It is to be hoped that such amendments will continue to appear from time to time and that the *Manual*'s legal accuracy will accordingly be further enhanced as the months and years go by.

More particularly, we hope that this book will be of assistance to users of the *Manual*, whether they be military lawyers, policy staffs, academics, military thinkers or others with an interest in the Law of War in its many contexts. Those users, whoever they may be, should understand that in the following pages we have put forward our joint personal views on the matters discussed. We do not seek to persuade as to the correctness of our view. Indeed, we positively invite readers to form their own opinions on the various points that we make. We do not speak for any government or institution, and we explicitly recognise that the purpose of the *Manual* is to set forth the Department's position, not that of commenting academics.

Nevertheless, we hope that what we have written will be found useful.

Finally, we would like to thank our wives for their patient understanding during the very many hours of study while the book was being written. We also thank Cambridge University Press for agreeing to publish, and all at CUP who have handled the publication process with such efficiency. Finally, we thank you, the reader, for taking the time to consider our thoughts on these matters.

Bill Boothby Wolff Heintschel von Heinegg



Abbreviations

- Amended Mines Protocol Amended Protocol on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Mines, Booby-Traps and Other Devices (1996)
- AMW Manual HPCR Manual on International Law Applicable to Air and Missile Warfare, Program on Humanitarian Policy and Conflict Research at Harvard University (2010)
- API Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949 and Relating to the Protection of Victims of International Armed Conflicts, Geneva (8 June 1977)
- API Commentary Y Sandoz, C Swinarski and B Zimmermann (eds), Commentary on the Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, and Relating to the Protection of Victims of International Armed Conflicts, International Committee of the Red Cross (1987)
- APII Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949 and Relating to the Protection of Victims of Non-International Armed Conflicts, Geneva (8 June 1977)
- APIII Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, and Relating to the Adoption of an Additional Distinctive Emblem (Protocol III) (8 December 2005)
- CCW Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons which May be Deemed to be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects (1980)
- CWC Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons, and on their Destruction, Paris (13 January 1993)
- DoD Manual United States Department of Defense Law of War Manual, United States Department of Defense (June 2015)

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List of Abbreviations

- FM 27–10 (Change No. 1 1976) US Department of the Army Field Manual: The Law of Land Warfare, United States Department of the Army (1956), as amended by Change No. 1, dated 15 July 1976
- GC Geneva Convention Relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War of August 12, 1949
- German Manual Bundesministerium der Verteidigung Joint Service Regulation (ZDv) 15/2, Law of Armed Conflict Manual (May 2013)
- GPW Geneva Convention Relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War of August 12, 1949
- GPW Commentary J S Pictet (ed.), Commentary III on Geneva Convention Relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War, International Committee of the Red Cross (1960)
- GWS Geneva Convention for the Amelioration of the Condition of the Wounded and Sick in Armed Forces in the Field of August 12, 1949
- GWS Commentary J S Pictet (ed.), Commentary I on Geneva Convention for the Amelioration of the Condition of the Wounded and Sick in Armed Forces in the Field, International Committee of the Red Cross (1952)
- GWS-Sea Geneva Convention for the Amelioration of the Condition of Wounded, Sick and Shipwrecked Members of Armed Forces at Sea of August 12, 1949
- GWS-Sea Commentary J S Pictet (ed.), Commentary II on Geneva Convention for the Amelioration of the Condition of Wounded, Sick and Shipwrecked Members of Armed Forces at Sea, International Committee of the Red Cross (1960)
- Hague Regulations Regulations Respecting the Laws and Customs of War on Land Annexed to Hague Convention IV (18 October 1907)
- ICJ International Court of Justice
- ICRC International Committee of the Red Cross
- ICRC Customary Law Study J-M Henckaerts and L Doswald-Beck, Customary International Humanitarian Law, vol. 1: Rules, International Committee of the Red Cross (2005)
- ICRC Commentary GCI ICRC, Commentary on the First Geneva Convention. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (2016)
- ILC International Law Commission
- Lieber Code Instructions for the Government of Armies of the United States in the Field, US Army General Order No. 100 (24 April 1863)
- NWP 1–14M The US Commander's Handbook on the Law of Naval Operations, NWP 1–14M, Department of the Navy, Department of Homeland Security (July 2007)



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- PW prisoner of war
- San Remo Manual Louise Doswald-Beck (ed.), San Remo Manual on International Law Applicable to Armed Conflicts at Sea, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (1995)
- Tallinn Manual Tallinn Manual on the International Law Applicable to Cyber Warfare (2013)
- Tallinn Manual 2.0 M N Schmitt (ed.), Tallinn Manual 2.0 on the International Law Applicable to Cyber Operations, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (2017)
- UK Manual The Manual of the Law of Armed Conflict, UK Ministry of Defence (2004)
- 1958 UK Manual The Law of War on Land, being Part III of the Manual of Military Law (1958)
- United States Air Force Publication Department of the Air Force, Air Force Operations and The Law, 85, 3rd edn. The Judge Advocate General's School (2014)
- UNCLOS 1982 UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, UN Doc. A/CONF.62/121 of 10 December 1982, 1833 UNTS 396

