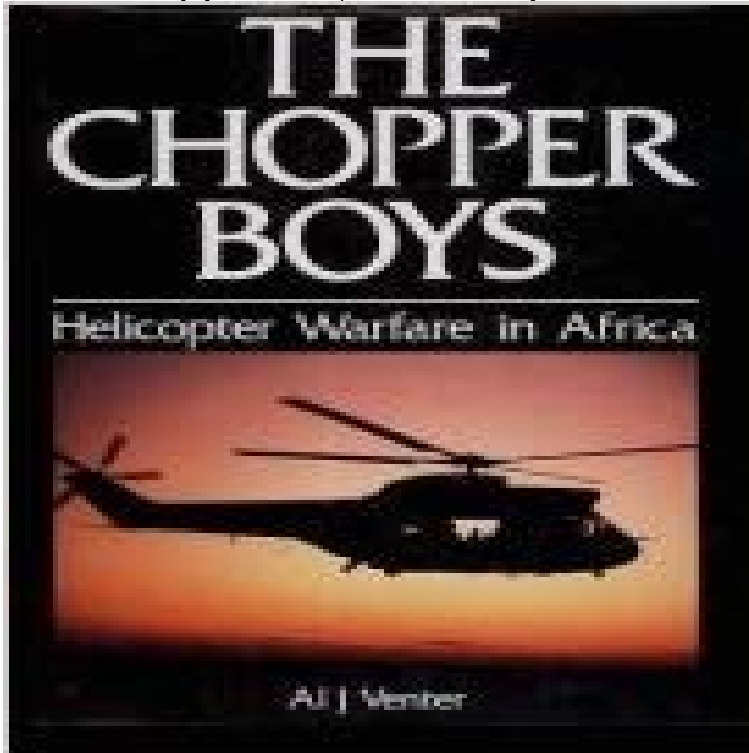


The Chopper Boys: Helicopter Warfare in Africa



Few military strategists have been prepared to concede the extraordinary role helicopter gunships have played in many African conflicts during the course of the past half-century. Malis government was on the verge of collapse following a largely al-Qaeda-backed invasion of the country when the French went in, early 2013. Three weeks later they had battled all the way up to the gates of Timbuktu and driven the rebels into the desert. It was ground forces that were at the vanguard of that onslaught, but they would have taken months without the backing of Frances legendary helicopter-orientated Armee de l'Air, details of which are to be found in the first chapter. It was exactly the same with Rhodesias war. Without gunships that guerrilla struggle would have been over in a couple of years, ground forces overwhelmed by preponderate insurgent numbers. Again, in South Africas Border War and the civil war that followed in Sierra Leone, it was gunships did most of the damage, as happened more recently with various mercenary groups fighting in Angola, Somalia and elsewhere. In Nigeria, a group of about 70 South African mercenaries went in against Boko Haram Jihadis in 2014. With chopper gunship-support they caused the rebels more damage in three months than the Nigerian Army achieved or rather, did not achieve - in six years The Chopper Boys was first published a quarter century ago on three continents: Britain, the United States and South Africa. It went well, the original edition having become a collectors item, which is why this edition is now appearing, reinforced by six new chapters that cover some of the events that have since taken place.

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