The Defense Acquisition Professional Reading List is intended to enrich the knowledge and understanding of the civilian, military, contractor, and industrial workforce who participate in the entire defense acquisition enterprise. These book recommendations are designed to complement the education and training vital to developing essential competencies and skills of the acquisition workforce. Each issue of the Defense Acquisition Research Journal will include one or more reviews of suggested books, with more available on our Website: http://dau.edu/library.

We encourage our readers to submit book reviews they believe should be required reading for the defense acquisition professional. The books themselves should be in print or generally available to a wide audience; address subjects and themes that have broad applicability to defense acquisition professionals; and provide context for the reader, not prescriptive practices. Book reviews should be 450 words or fewer, describe the book and its major ideas, and explain its relevancy to defense acquisition. Please send your reviews to the managing editor, Defense Acquisition Research Journal at DefenseARJ@dau.edu.

**Featured Book**

*12 Seconds of Silence: How a Team of Inventors, Tinkerers, and Spies Took Down a Nazi Superweapon*

**Author:** Jamie Holmes  
**Publisher:** Houghton Mifflin Harcourt  
**Copyright Date:** 2020  
**Hard/Softcover/Digital:** Hardcover, 416 pages  
**ISBN-13:** 9781328460127  
**Reviewed by:** Emily Beliles, Assistant Editor, Defense ARJ
Review:
Jamie Holmes’ *12 Seconds of Silence* is the untold story of the scientists of Section T and the race to develop the proximity fuse (or fuze). At the dawn of World War II, with few resources dedicated to military research and woefully underfunded Army and Navy research laboratories, America found itself unprepared to keep up with rapidly developing German technology. Holmes notes that, “In 1938, the Army devoted only 1.5 percent of its budget to research” (p. 32). Just 18 months before the U.S. would enter the war, President Franklin D. Roosevelt established the National Defense Research Committee (later Office of Scientific Research and Development [OSRD]), marking the U.S. Government’s first serious investment in scientific research and partnering university research labs, the DoD, and industry executives in a united effort. Section T, a branch of OSRD, was led by Merle Tuve and tasked with developing a “smart” fuse that would detonate in proximity to approaching aircraft rather than on a preset timer.

This thrilling story documents how the team at Section T met this challenge against all odds. While the huge German research base at Peenemunde, with over 17,000 workers, was developing the V-1 flying bomb to bombard London, Section T was developing the smart fuse that would take them down. Working out of an old car garage in Maryland with a backyard in rural Virginia for a testing ground, the scientists of Section T accomplished this task in just 2 years and not a moment too soon.

On June 13, 1944, shortly after D-Day, the first V-1 struck London, marking the dawn of a new type of aerial warfare. The British anti-aircraft gunners and the Royal Air Force pilots were no match for the high speeds of the V-1. Nearly 3,000 Londoners died from the V-1 attacks in the first 3 weeks. As the V-1 terrorized London, Section T rushed to fit the smart fuse to British shells in just 2 months. Aimed by batteries largely staffed by women, nicknamed “ack-ack girls,” the smart fuse was able to take down V-1s with near 100% accuracy. On naval ships, it helped turn the tide in the Pacific, and when employed later as an antipersonnel weapon, the smart fuse, in the words of General George Patton, “won the Battle of the Bulge for us” (p. 268). Eventually, even the atomic bombs dropped over Hiroshima were armed with a Section T smart fuse.

Holmes’ historical account of these events makes for a captivating read for individuals from every background. The story is particularly relevant to the Defense Acquisition Workforce in highlighting the connection between rapidly advancing technology and war strategy.
Section T “helped infuse scientific analysis directly into military tactics” (p. 162), cementing the vital role of scientific research in the Department of Defense. The development of the smart fuse is also a key example of the critical necessity of delivering capabilities faster and focusing on the needs of the Warfighter. As Merle Tuve said, “Our moral responsibility goes all the way to the final battle use of this unit; its failure there is our failure” (p. 135). Although OSRD and Section T were dissolved in 1947, the innovative collaboration between the DoD and leaders in science and industry paved the way for the thriving science and technology ecosystem that persists within the military today.

Readers will thoroughly enjoy *12 Seconds of Silence* and this exciting story of the scientists of Section T.