



Point Option: A Time-Travel Military Thriller

Ian A. O'Connor

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Point Option is a thrilling time travel story that's wrapped in the smooth steel of a military at-sea operation.

A US Navy strike group is overtaken by a strange weather phenomenon in Ian A. O'Connor's military thriller *Point Option*.

Dave is a US Air Force pilot on special assignment in the Mediterranean with the US Navy aircraft carrier the *USS LBJ*. Various aircraft begin to report failures with their radio, navigation, and weather instruments. One incident leads to the deaths of two pilots—by all accounts, of old age. But that isn't possible. The craft was brand new, and the pilots were in their late twenties.

By command order, exercises continue, with Dave scheduled to fly. He and his copilot are forced to bail out after encountering a bright green flash; they are sent into near free fall by the energetic blast. They should be just off the coast of Italy, but land in an Italy unlike that they know. When the *LBJ* encounters the same phenomenon, a recon mission is ordered; the team members encounter the Tower of Pisa only a few feet off center, sometime in the late 1300s. Command realizes that something more mind-boggling is happening than temporary instrument failure. What follows is an all-hands command mission to retrieve the missing pilots, and to get all personnel back home.

Dave is a well-informed outsider in this ensemble story; no character carries more weight, beyond their ranking, than any other. The ship's command structure serves this purpose well, and there are several layers of command in any given situation. Though the central cast is about ten strong, a supporting cast of unseen military personnel keeps the vehicles in motion and proves just as important to the plot's smooth transitions.

The text is laden with military jargon, but it's explained in brief when it's first introduced, eschewing in-depth orientation to complex military intricacies, or to ship and aircraft operations. Other information is filled in as it becomes necessary to the plot. These broad strokes end up enabling immersion in Dave's world of military-ready movements and exercises. In turn: the book's science elements are both concrete and nebulous, with time travel elements precipitated by a force that is electrical and spatial, at times visualized as dense fog and at other times invisible. The scientific expertise of the personnel, men with command rank and advanced engineering and meteorological degrees, is a solid foundation from which to examine the phenomenon and plot a course to the original time, however improbable their situation.

The book's sustained suspense is compelling, with the higher goal of finding a way for the *LBJ* to intercept the phenomena always high in the minds of the book's commanding officers. Shorter-term goals, like retrieving Dave and his co-pilot, plotting courses without the aid of modern science, and a rescue mission, are followed by planning for the next goal, but all happens in service of everyone returning home. The result is an immersive story about the command workings of a military ship in crisis.

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DONTANÁ MCPHERSON-JOSEPH (September 28, 2021)

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