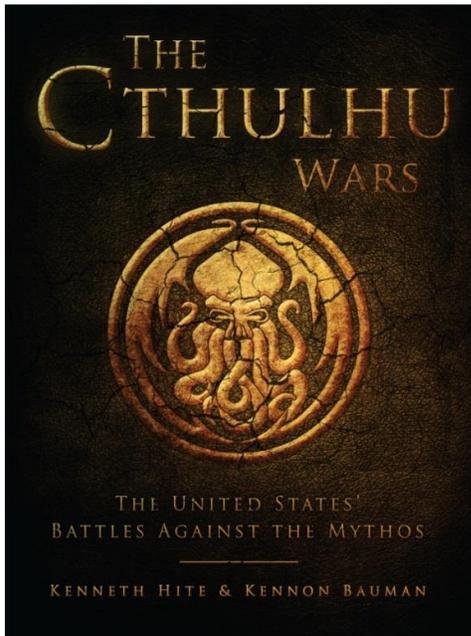


The Cthulhu Wars
Osprey (2016) £11.99/\$18.95
By Kenneth Hite and Kennon Bauman

Review by Jonathan Aird

Contents:

Introduction
On the dark frontier
A lonely and curious country
Innsmouth and after
The Coldest War
The global war on horror



Attentive readers may recall an earlier review of Osprey's *The Cthulhu Campaigns* that was a little luke-warm: a good idea, great illustrations but a let-down because the text read like a game supplement for a non-existent game. *The Cthulhu Wars* is, to my mind, far more successful as a book because it lays out a history of the interactions between Mythos creatures and the United States, in particular, going right back to the first colonies in a continuous chronological narrative. There is no suggestion in the narrative that this is anything other than a laying out of a factual account. The book works through several chapters to reach the events described in Lovecraft's *The Shadow over Innsmouth* and then takes this military action as a jumping-off point to develop the history of an on-going battle against Cthulhu, the Deep Ones and in particular the ever present Mi-Go threat. There are several incidents described in the early chapters

which could be spun into one-off scenarios or even a whole skirmish campaign of the ghouls at Chickamauga, for example, or the involvement of the men of Innsmouth in the Revolutionary War.

The attack on Innsmouth in 1928 leads on to the establishment of an independent agency with the wide-ranging remit of defending the USA against all NREs (Necronomican Related Entities) and their exploits are related in the rest of the book. At first, it would seem that they are nothing but successful but perhaps failures have been hushed up! They have wide involvement in World War II and Korea. Things start to go wrong in Vietnam and thereafter, as the funding dries up and attention goes elsewhere. The story offers a lot of interest gaming-wise. There are big battles, fleet encounters, skirmishes and raids and the illustrations of these are excellent throughout. Everyone who has ever read Lovecraft will have their own ideas on what the creatures of horror actually look like but artist Darren Tan has captured these creatures well in the many plates.

In all, *The Cthulhu Wars* is an amusing alternative secret history of the USA. It succeeds as a narrative, although the telling obviously came at some peril to one of the authors who, in true Lovecraftian fashion, disappeared in mysterious circumstances shortly before completing the book. There is clearly much more to say but *wait* here is a strange *tapping* at my window. I can see a *face*, ah, no *the horror!*