



Operation Snakebite: The Explosive True Story of an Afghan Desert Siege, Stephen Grey, Penguin Books Limited, 2009, 0141923946, 9780141923949, 400 pages. In December 2007, Stephen Grey, a Sunday Times reporter, was under fire in Afghanistan as British and US forces struggled to liberate the Taliban stronghold of Musa Qala. Taking shelter behind an American armoured Humvee, Grey turned his head to witness scenes of carnage. A car and a truck were riddled with gunfire. Their occupants, including several children, had died. Taliban positions were pounded by bullets and bombs dropped on their compounds. A day later, as the operation continued, a mine exploded just yards from Grey, killing a British soldier. Who, he wondered in the days that followed, was responsible for the bloodshed? And what purpose did it serve? A compelling story of one military venture that lasted several days, Operation Snakebite draws on Grey's exclusive interviews with everyone from private soldiers to NATO commanders. The result is a thrilling and at times horrifying story of a war which has gone largely unnoticed back home..

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Company Commander , Russell Lewis, 2012, Afghan War, 2001-, 402 pages. Six months, Under constant attack, 200 men relying on you 24/7. What would you do? In 2008 Major Russell Lewis commanded a company of two hundred soldiers from the British Army

3 Commando Air Assault, Ewen Southby-Tailyour, 2010, Afghan War, 2001-, 284 pages. When the Royal Marines Commandos returned to a chaotic Helmand in the winter of 2008, they realised that to stand any chance of success they would need to pursue an

Danger Close , Colonel Stuart Tootal, Jul 27, 2009, Biography & Autobiography, 300 pages. Colonel Stuart Tootal is the first senior commander to provide an account of the fighting in Afghanistan. A gritty portrayal of unforgiving conflict, Danger Close captures the

Ground Truth: 3 Para Return to Afghanistan , Patrick Bishop, Jun 1, 2009, History, 352 pages. Afghanistan, 2008. After their eighteen-month epic tour of Helmand Province, the troops of 3 Para are back. This time, the weight of experience weighs heavily on their shoulders..

Interrogation of Morals , Jason Meszaros, Apr 10, 2009, Biography & Autobiography, 248 pages. "An autobiographical piece by Jason Meszaros about his experience serving in the military during an eight month tour of duty in Afghanistan in 2004. His military service in

Captains Blog - The Chronicles of My Afghan Vacation , Mark W. Bromwich, 2007, Biography & Autobiography, 192 pages. This is a collection of entries from an online journal created by a U.S. Soldier stationed in Afghanistan. He was assigned as an embedded trainer with the Afghan National Army

Over You , Lucy Diamond, 2008, Fiction, 384 pages. Josie goes back a long way with Nell and LisaÐ“ÑžtheyÐ“Ñžve been flatmates, soul-mates, and best mates and, what now seems a lifetime ago, have all lived in London in a succession of

3 Commando Brigade Helmand Assault, Ewen Southby-Tailyour, Apr 28, 2011, Afghan War, 2001-, 284 pages. Military history..

Ghost Plane The True Story of the CIA Torture Program, Stephen Grey, Oct 17, 2006, Political Science, 372 pages. Investigative journalist Grey tells the inside story of international prisons sanctioned by the U.S. Government and used by the CIA to hold and torture people suspected of

18 Hours The True Story of an SAS War Hero, Sandra Lee, 2006, Afghan War, 2001-, 316 pages. A gripping immediate account of modern warfare; a powerful, action-filled anatomy of one soldier's 18-hour battle against the world's most dangerous terrorist group, Al Qaeda

Wanat Combat Action in Afghanistan, 2008, , 2010, Wanat, Battle of, Afghanistan, 2008, 257 pages. On 13 July 2008, nine American soldiers perished while fighting a pitched battle in the village of Wanat in Afghanistan's Waygal Valley. On that day, the men of Company C, 2d

Ross Kemp on Afghanistan , Ross Kemp, Jun 4, 2009, History, 336 pages. Ross Kemp risks all to tell the story of the British soldier in Ross Kemp on Afghanistan. He has played an East End hardman, an SAS soldier and investigated vicious world gangs

Fortunate enough to get a copy of this book a couple of days ago in Hatchards. Unable to put down until finished. If you like war accounts then this is a trully gripping account of another fierce, brutal firefight with lives torn apart. Bloody and nasty battle worn soldiers getting down to a job that had to be done. Operation Snakebite is everything a reader wants from a war book. Sadly though this is not fictional and like so many accounts of a war against the Taliban the outcome is always so unpredictable. Many soldiers come home without colleagues and some without limbs. If you enjoy the book as much as I have please ensure you make a donation to help for heroes as these accounts could not be written without our boys and the enormous courage they have.

Stephen Grey's book gives an excellent, sympathetic impression of what it is like to be at the 'sharp end' of operations in Afghanistan - and a severely critical view of Kharzai's government ! It's a rattling good read - and has excellent maps and graphics to explain the complications of modern warfare. If you want to find out what it's like to be a soldier in Afghanistan, with all its frustrations, then this is the book for you.

For those who enjoy the "war book" genre, this is a stonking good read. It is finely crafted, with a well-structured narrative and a good mixture of characterisation, description and fact to keep the reader turning the pages to the very end. It also provides an account of - as the blurb puts it - "an at times horrifying story of a war which has gone largely unnoticed back home."

The reason it has gone "largely unnoticed", of course, is that the MoD not only avoided telling anyone about it, but put a security block on the official publication of details, which left the MoD website devoid of information, with journalists contacting the Taleban on their mobile telephones to get details of the operation.

Courtesy of Grey, we now know that there were several reasons for the MoD's reticence, one being the co-incidental visit of Gordon Brown to Camp Bastion. With the largest operation then to have been mounted in Helmand Province and with the outcome far from certain, officials were concerned that news of the operation might detract from the prime minister's visit, especially if there were casualties.

But the major reason, Grey tells us, was that both the British and the Americans had decided that this was to be an I/O - an "information operation" - otherwise known as a propaganda exercise. The intention was to convey to the outside world that this was an operation led by the Afghanis, assisted by coalition forces.

As a result, we had the bizarre scene of the "capture" of the town centre being photographed by the MoD's Defence Combat Camera Team, showing jubilant Afghani troops raising their national flag. To achieve this, British and US forces, who had fought their way into the town, after periods of intense combat, were forced to hide their vehicles and keep out of sight for the fiction to be perpetrated.

The fighting by the coalition forces, the lead up to the operation and the political background, are well-described by Grey, leaving the reader under no illusions that this major operation was almost entirely a coalition effort, made possible by the injection of massive US forces, including elements of the US 82nd Airborne Division, which paved the way for the assault with a daring, if risky, helicopter assault.

Of special interest is Grey's detail of the number of mine strikes suffered by British forces, one of which he witnessed, giving a moving and personal edge to the account, which benefited from Grey's presence as an embedded reporter and his personal knowledge and friendships with some of his subjects. He also notes that the King's Royal Hussars were equipped with Mastiffs, with the squadron taking fourteen IED hits, suffering no serious injuries - although does not link the two issues.

There is also a graphic and detailed account of the intervention of USAF AC-130H Spectres in the final stages of the assault on Musa Qala, a role which Grey describes as "decisive", confirming the utility of these airborne gunships as a battle-winning weapon - something of which British procurement officials should take note.

If there is a small criticism, Grey is perhaps over-reliant on the opinions of those he interviews - of which there are an impressive number, in excess of 200. Despite his access to top-ranking military officials, he makes very little use of them - and we thus do not see enough of Grey's own thoughts in terms of evaluating their responses. Perhaps that is for another book.

That notwithstanding, this is a well-written historical narrative, in which Grey the journalist excels, aided by superb maps, illustrations and photographs. It is a valuable and important addition to the growing library of works beginning to emerge from the Afghani campaign and is an essential read for anyone who seeks a better understanding of what is indeed "a war which has gone largely unnoticed back home." Read more ›

Great book! I was apart of the mission that held place in Musa Qala. It has some small flaws to the story, but for the most part it was accurate. Page 212 mentions my name. I just wish they would have mentioned more of what we went through. That would be a book in its self. Enjoy it. It's worth the time to read. Thanks Steven Grey for helping put our part in history out there!

A truly excellent narative which tells a soldiers story of just how this latest war is being fought. As a veteran of desert warefare I can assure readers that Stephen Grey has captured the very essence of excitement, fear, danger, elation, frustration and sadness in a well paced and easily read narrative. This book is a real 'page turner' that covers the soldiers, politicians and civillian actions that they, in their own sphere, hope will make a difference.

If you want to gain a better understanding of modern warfare, the impact of military/political strategic planning or just want to get an insight into the lives of soldiers in combat, then read this book; it covers all this and more. I consider that this is one of the most accurate, complete and compelling accounts of conflict ever written. I know, as I was there.

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Magnificent... the fear, the courage, the uncertainty and the sheer mayhem of two days intensive fighting is frequently more vivid than any film (Misha Glenny Misha Glenny, Mail on Sunday 20090510) Superb, fast-paced. Captures the grit and the gore, the exhaustion and emotion, the killing and the dying (Raymond Bonner Raymond Bonner, The Guardian 20090425) This is an uncommonly vivid portrait of battle, matched by sharp investigation of purposes, intrigues and cock-ups... Grey's descriptions of firefights are exemplary (Max Hastings Max Hastings, Sunday Times 20090405) A fascinating insight... a catalogue of doubt, criticism and anger (David Crouch David Crouch, Financial Times 20090518) A gripping and moving account (Dr Rodney Atwood Dr Rodney Atwood, Soldier Magazine 20090801) An exceptional piece of reportage (Michael Smith Michael Smith, New Statesman 20090518)

For those who enjoy the "war book" genre, this is a stonking good read. It is finely crafted, with a well-structured narrative and a good mixture of characterisation, description and fact to keep the reader turning the pages to the very end. It also provides an account of - as the blurb puts it - "an at times horrifying story of a war which has gone largely unnoticed back home." The reason it has gone "largely unnoticed", of course, is that the MoD not only avoided telling anyone about it, but put a security block on the official publication of details, which left the MoD website devoid of information, with journalists contacting the Taliban on their mobile telephones to get details of the operation. Courtesy of Grey, we now know that there were several reasons for the MoD's reticence, one being the co-incidental visit of Gordon Brown to Camp Bastion. With the largest operation then to have been mounted in Helmand Province and with the outcome far from certain, officials were concerned that news of the operation might detract from the prime minister's visit, especially if there were casualties. But the major reason, Grey tells us, was that both the British and the Americans had decided that this was to be an I/O - an "information operation" - otherwise known as a propaganda exercise. The intention was to convey to the outside world that this was an operation led by the Afghans, assisted by coalition forces. As a result, we had the bizarre scene of the "capture" of the town centre being photographed by the MoD's Defence Combat Camera Team, showing jubilant Afghani troops raising their national flag. To achieve this, British and US forces, who had fought their way into the town, after periods of intense combat, were forced to hide their vehicles and keep out of sight for the fiction to be perpetrated. The fighting by the coalition forces, the lead up to the operation and the political background, are well-described by Grey, leaving the reader under no illusions that this major operation was almost entirely a coalition effort, made possible by the injection of massive US forces, including elements of the US 82nd Airborne Division, which paved the way for the assault with a daring, if risky, helicopter assault. Behind this operation are the political machinations, both Afghani and military, which lends a conspiratorial overtone to the book, lifting it above the ordinary "war book", giving it more depth than would be expected from this genre. With a highly informative account of the history of Helmand to open the book, this makes this a rounded narrative, which culminates in a short analytical chapter which tries to set the operation in the broader context of the counter-insurgency operation in Afghanistan. Of special interest is Grey's detail of the number of mine strikes suffered by British forces, one of which he witnessed, giving a moving and personal edge to the account, which benefited from Grey's presence as an embedded reporter and his personal knowledge and friendships with some of his subjects. He also notes that the King's Royal Hussars were equipped with Mastiffs, with the squadron taking fourteen IED hits, suffering no serious injuries - although does not link the two issues. There is also a graphic and detailed account of the intervention of USAF AC-130H Spectres in the final stages of the assault on Musa Qala, a role which Grey describes as "decisive", confirming the utility of these airborne gunships as a battle-winning weapon - something of which British procurement officials should take note. If there is a small criticism, Grey is perhaps over-reliant on the opinions of those he interviews - of which there are an impressive number, in excess of 200. Despite his access to top-ranking military officials, he makes very little use of them - and we thus do not see enough of Grey's own thoughts in terms of evaluating their responses. Perhaps that is for another book. That notwithstanding, this is a well-written historical narrative, in which Grey the journalist excels, aided by superb maps, illustrations and photographs. It is a valuable and important addition to the growing library of works beginning to emerge from the Afghani campaign and is an essential read for anyone who seeks a better understanding of what is indeed "a war which has gone largely unnoticed back home." Read more ›

I was encouraged by a friend to buy Operation Snakebite by Stephen Grey. I have been very shocked reading the account that it relates of the differing aims and objectives of our partners in the Afgan war, and of the Government there. Our appalling military shortages, and the duplicity of the politicians. The book is a facinating and readable insight into the life of our soldiers out there. No-one should miss out on this book.

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