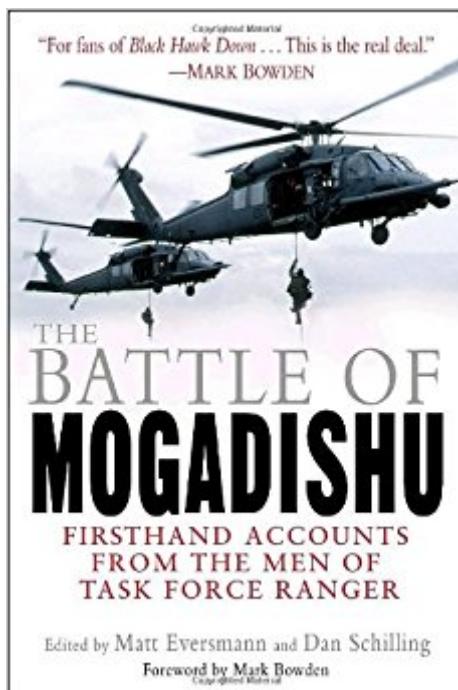


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The Battle Of Mogadishu: Firsthand Accounts From The Men Of Task Force Ranger



Synopsis

Ã¢ “No matter how skilled the writer of nonfiction, you are always getting the story secondhand. HereÃ¢ s a chance to go right to the source. . . . These men were there.” MARK BOWDEN (from the Foreword) It started as a mission to capture a Somali warlord. It turned into a disastrous urban firefight and death-defying rescue operation that shocked the world and rattled a great nation. Now the 1993 battle for Mogadishu, Somalia— the incident that was the basis of the book and film *Black Hawk Down*— is remembered by the men who fought and survived it. Six of the best in our military recall their brutal experiences and brave contributions in these never-before-published, first-person accounts. “Operation Gothic Serpent,” by Matt Eversmann: As a chalk leader, Eversmann was part of the first group of Rangers to “fast rope” from the Black Hawk helicopters. It was his chalk that suffered the first casualty of the battle. “Sua Sponte: Of Their Own Accord,” by Raleigh Cash: Responsible for controlling and directing fire support for the platoon, Cash entered the raging battle in the ground convoy sent to rescue his besieged brothers in arms. “Through My Eyes,” by Mike Kurth: One of only two African Americans in the battle, Kurth confronted his buddies’ deaths, realizing that “the only people whom I had let get anywhere near me since I was a child were gone.” “What Was Left Behind,” by John Belman: He roped into the biggest firefight of the battle and considers some of the mistakes that were made, such as using Black Hawk helicopters to provide sniper cover. “Be Careful What You Wish For,” by Tim Wilkinson: He was one of the Air Force pararescuemen or PJs— the highly trained specialists for whom “That Others May Live” is no catchphrase but a credo— and sums up his incomprehensible courage as “just holding up my end of the deal on a bad day.” “On Friendship and Firefights,” by Dan Schilling: As a combat controller, he was one of the original planners for the deployment of SOF forces to Mogadishu in the spring of 1993. During the battle, he survived the initial assault and carnage of the vehicle convoys only to return to the city to rescue his two closest friends, becoming, literally, “Last Out.” With America’s withdrawal from Somalia an oft-cited incitement to Osama bin Laden, it is imperative to revisit this seminal military mission and learn its lessons from the men who were there and, amazingly, are still here. From the Hardcover edition.

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“This collection provides enthralling reading about a sad chapter in American military history.”—Richmond Times-Dispatch

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I had the honor of meeting Matt Eversmann at a conference. He is inspiring and humbling. He is better spoken than most and one solid man. He is a guy you want to know and it kills me to know what he endured for our country. War is wrong. It is something that just shouldn't happen if we were lucky. We in this country are extraordinarily lucky to have men and women like Matt who are willing to step into the unknown moment. They can prepare for battle, but I don't think that moment is really one that anyone can fully anticipate accurately. Thanks to Matt and the hundreds and thousands like him who go where no one should ever go.

The book collects the stories of 6 of the participants, each reporting on their view and participation in the battle. The unifying theme is the incredible skill and courage of the troops involved and to a near equal extent the fog of war and a breakdown in the command structure. The 6 stories come from a variety of participants from Rangers, CSAR , and others. It illustrates the compact nature of urban fighting where a single alley may present the same crossing challenge as the Rhine. Perhaps the most depressing part of the stories were the casualties taken in the vehicles as they lumbered, often lost, through the city trying to get to their destinations. Personally I feel that this is another area where the presence of the AC-130s would have been a huge advantage in maintaining situational awareness, providing routing intelligence for the vehicles and if required, "discouraging" the enemy from obstructing intersections. The second missing element was American armored vehicles. The extended time required to launch the UN rescue and its disorganization resulted in more deaths. The arrival at the sites for extraction (after hours and hours of preparation and delay) without sufficient vehicles to carry all of the fighters was inexcusable. The tragedy of this battle is not just the losses we suffered, but the great encouragement this engagement gave to bin Laden. In his subsequent Declaration of War he uses his success and the hasty American retreat from Somalia here as an argument that they will prevail in their war. From the President to the grunt it was a brutal

lesson in not leaving anything behind when you go to war. Because the particular operation looked quick and simple did not mean that it was going to be quick and simple. Ammunition, water and NVG's were left behind, much the regret of most everyone involved. The stories help bring the culture of Somalia to light. As one participant noted, everyone seemed to be armed. When we arrived they stopped shooting at each other and started shooting at us. Perhaps some future book will more closely examine post event intel on bin Laden's participation in the events and the possibility that the meeting of the Somali Warlords was simply a trap laid for the unwary Americans. Overall the book delivers what it promises and more. Highly recommended.

I was just just a kid during The Vietnam War. My oldest brother fought over there. We were NOT allowed to watch the News. When The Battle of Mogadishu happened. I was old enough to watch and follow as much of the news coverage as possible. I was totally shocked and horrified to see what our soldiers had to go through in that small amount of time. (FOREVER TO THEM) It gave me a whole new respect for my family members who served The U.S.A. Now we are right smack at the beginning of WWIII and to think how many more Mogadishu like battles are going to fought tears my heart out. These men in this book and stories like this, of the bravery, sacrifice and love for one another will stand as a testament to ALL The World. That we AMERICANS will not go down kicking and screaming.

Bowdens' "Black Hawk Down: A Story of Modern War" provides the overview of events, while this book provides the personal stories of several participants. granted that these men are not professional writers, and their stories are each in their own voice, which could be jarring for some readers when the move from one mans account to the next; but that failing is also the fundamental strength of this book. these are the personal accounts of men who were there. they say what they want, and try and set the record strait where they can. as a companion book to Black Hawk Down, it really is invaluable, as it provides a fresh window on events. but even on its own, it stands as a fascinating set of accounts by men who lived through the battle of Mogadishu.

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