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Book Reviews

Black Hawk Down 2

by
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It is an appropriate time to review this book published 12 months ago, as one of the participants of the "Battle of the Black Sea", then SFC Bob Mabry, is the keynote speaker at this years AMMA conference. CAPT Bob Mabry MC USA will speak on this battle engagement.

On Oct 03 1993, "Task Force Ranger", consisting of 19 aircraft, 12 vehicles and approximately 170 men, began an operation to capture two members of Mohammed Farrah Aideed's clan from a house in Mogadishu. The entire operation was expected to take less than 60 minutes but resulted in a high-intensity urban environment battle lasting 15 hours, leaving 19 dead and over 100 injured American soldiers. The Somali losses, killed in action, were judged to be in the hundreds to thousands.

This recount of the battle is from a predominantly American perspective following many interviews by the author with the surviving participants. However, the author also returned to Mogadishu in 1997 and interviewed several local residents who were involved in the battle in different ways, from bystander to medical personnel at the hospital.

In the author's own words, his aim was to produce a historically accurate narrative with the emotion of the personal memoir. By being true to the interviews he conducted. Bowden has achieved factual accuracy but he adds the emotions and thoughts of the soldiers as the battle progresses. This is an interesting insight into what soldiers think and talk about whilst under heavy fire. Some of these exchanges are noble, others less so and some are simply downright bizarre (from a non-combatant's perspective). Whatever you think, Bowden has succeeded in producing a book which is more than just a chronological retelling of the battle.

The book is enhanced by including the experiences of the families of those killed in action. Back in the USA, we hear the stories and emotions of the wives and parents, as the military authorities arrive at the homes to tell of their tragic loss.

We also get a superficial account of the national American political process that occurred after the battle and how the Mogadishu experience has shaped America's UN involvement since. This, of course is more opinion than fact but Bowden's extensive knowledge of the events of the time makes him, at least in this issue, an authority worth reading. This is an enjoyable, well-written book about the tragic processes of war.