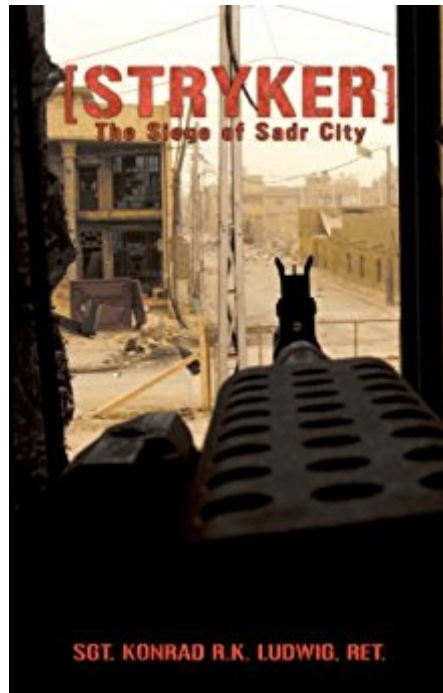




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Stryker: The Siege Of Sadr City



Synopsis

In the spring of 2008, Coalition troops responded in-force to what quickly became one of the largest, bloodiest and most influential battles of the Iraq War. For nearly three months, American and Iraqi troops fought for control over the most dangerous urban district of Baghdad, against the ruthless insurgent militia of the Jaish al-Mahdi - a struggle that would change the face of the entire war. Sgt Ludwig's gripping narrative offers an unfiltered view of the Final Battle of Sadr City, as seen through his eyes from behind the wrath of a machine gun. Still a young idealistic boy, he enlists with a high-impact urban assault Stryker unit known as "Bull Company" and comes face-to-face with his own oblivion. Up against the full might of the Jaish al-Mahdi, they embark on a one-way mission deep behind enemy lines, to capture a well-guarded militia stronghold and defend their ground "for as long as it takes." This is the story of what really happened in the late years of Operation Iraqi Freedom. The story our media neglected to tell.

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Customer Reviews

His book is an insightful record of the experiences of an NCO in a Stryker unit involved in urban combat in Iraq. It details the ultimate futility felt by the soldiers, after their initial enthusiasm had been eroded by the death & wounding of their mates; the requirement to fulfil stupid orders handed-down from backroom commanders; the need to expend lives & assets in attacking & securing enemy positions, only to retire, & allow the enemy to regain the area; the difference in living standards between active front-line troops & the REMFs. Konrad expresses the anguish of having close comrades KIA, & the inner terror of PTSD. years after his military service. The book is well written & his vivid descriptions of actions & events can make you feel that you are there with him, both seeing, smelling & feeling it. Konrad's outstanding military service in Iraq was a life-changing experience, as it was for most front-line troops. Thank you Konrad for your outstanding effort in recording your military service in Iraq, & for sharing it with us.

I have been studying the Battle of Sadr City at work and decided that my efforts would be enriched by using a first person source rather than depending on official reports from the units that took part in the engagement (I have 1-2d SCR's After Action Report). I found that once I started reading, the author's writing style proved to be so refreshing and vibrant that I had a difficult time putting it down at night when it came time to getting ready for the next days early am commute into Washington DC. It is well done, revealing, and authentic. The author made it a point to explain that he did research the available records to ensure as few mistakes as possible crept into his book. I think he did a fine job since the only error that I caught was his identifying C/2-30th Infantry as part of 10th Mountain Division (they belong to 3d Infantry Division and were attached to 10th ID - see Dale Andrade's "Surging South of Baghdad"). In addition to the narrative, the author provides a schematic of the M1126 Stryker and several maps at the beginning of the book. The only point of interest that I could not readily locate was the checkpoint where the Iraqi lieutenant was killed. Otherwise the maps were very helpful. He is the second person to bring to light the refusal of the engineers to emplace the T-wall barrier along PL Gold after one of their number was hit by a sniper. The former XO of C/1-68 Armor works in the building next to mine and I intend to ask him about the incident. Organized with a prologue, ten chapters (each around 30 - 35 pages), and an epilogue. Maps and reference are on page viii, a section on Bull Company, 1/2 SCR begins on p. XI, special contributors on p. xvii, acknowledgements (p. xix), and afterward (p. xxv). There isn't an index, but that really does not pose a problem to someone who reads the book thoroughly. Very good editing. Did not catch a typo until sentence 8, para 1, p. 373 (banned versus banded) and the only one other on p. 377 (toe versus tow in sentence 6, paragraph 4). That is exceptional for all but the largest

publishing houses nowadays. Ludwig's insights on leadership and camaraderie in battle were especially illuminating. Highly recommended. It will have a prominent place on my OIF reference shelf.

Tell's it like it is. All of the idiosyncrasies of the Army from time immemorable, Candid and humorous. For someone considering infantry, this spells it out. The book is a page turner. You won't find references to squishy romance or the girl back home. Clean the guns, go on patrol. Shoot bad guys and make fun of the rear area POG. I thought his chapter of being stationed in Germany evocative. As a child I grew up on an Army base there. So I feel right at home with soldiers. Great bargain and a great read.

Konrad Ludwig puts us in the middle of the battle with Bull Company for Sadr City in a gripping and very personal way. He reveals his own thoughts and emotions in an incredibly unflinching way making no attempt to pretty it up. We see how difficult it is to make split second kill decisions in a packed city environment. How hesitation is death and mistakes are gut wrenching, leaving permanent scars. We feel the vulnerability of being under attack for days with little or no rest knowing that any complacency or inattention is sure death. We learn that the physical and mental demands required to prevail in this kind of battle way exceed world class endurance sports. I didn't know the world of the Grunt. My perspective is as a USAF Forward Air Controller in Viet Nam. I knew my life in the air was a cake walk compared to the constant threat and deprivation ground troops endure for days, weeks, and months on end, but, my God, I had no real clue how dramatic the difference is. I came away from Ludwig's book with a huge admiration for our ground troops who voluntarily put themselves in unbelievable danger to protect our way of life. Konrad Ludwig is also an insightful teacher of the philosophy and realities of war. He teaches us the lessons our senior leaders often cannot remember from previous wars. "There isn't a weapon in the world that's worth a half-baked s*** if you're not allowed to pull the trigger." Profound and classic on many levels. "Let me make this clear: I believe in the laws of war. I believe in the discretion of violence. I believe there is something vital and essentially human preserved in the Rules of Engagement." He makes a strong case that the ROEs are mostly "about saving face in the headlines." I think Ludwig believes as I do that micro management of a battle by absent higher ups loses battles and gets people killed. When soldiers are sent into harms way they need the freedom to make life and death decisions in a split second without fear of being charged with murder for a mistake. "Combat is assertive. It favors aggression. It demands action." Soldiers can't do this with their hands tied and ROEs requiring

hesitant actions. The military's job should have been to "show up and fight, to fight until the fight was over." He observes that politics often takes over to stop the fighting before the stated objectives are accomplished and is the same as defeat. Confusing politics with mission is deadly. My review only scratches the surface of lessons learned from this great book, destined I think to be a handbook for decision makers. For me, it was a joy getting to know Sgt. Ludwig and his fellow soldiers. Thanks for giving us all something to be very proud of and for a great book.

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