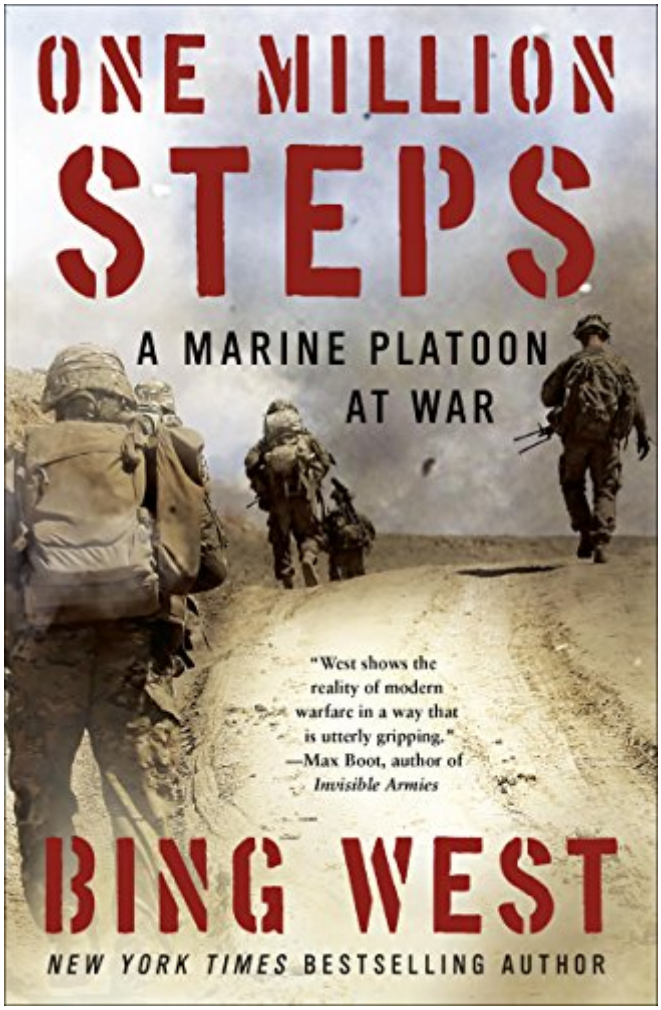
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One Million Steps: A Marine Platoon At War



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Synopsis

Battalion 3/5 suffered the highest number of casualties in the war in Afghanistan. This is the story of one platoon in that distinguished battalion. Ã Â Aware of U.S. plans to withdraw from the country, knowing their efforts were only a footprint in the sand, the fifty Marines of 3rd Platoon fought in Sangin, the most dangerous district in all of Afghanistan. So heavy were the casualties that the Secretary of Defense offered to pull the Marines out. Instead, they pushed forward. Each Marine in 3rd Platoon patrolled two and a half miles a day for six monthsÃ¢â ¬â •a total of one million stepsÃ¢â ¬â •in search of a ghostlike enemy that struck without warning. Why did the Marines attack and attack, day after day?Ã Â Ã Â Ã Â Every day brought a new skirmish. Each footfall might trigger an IED. Half the Marines in 3rd Platoon didnÃ¢â ¬â„¢t make it intact to the end of the tour. One Million Steps is the story of the fifty brave men who faced these grim odds and refused to back down. Based on Bing WestÃ¢â ¬â„¢s embeds with 3rd Platoon, as well as on their handwritten log, this is a gripping gruntÃ¢â ¬â„¢s-eye view of life on the front lines of AmericaÃ¢â ¬â„¢s longest war. Writing with a combat veteranÃ¢â ¬â„¢s compassion for the fallen, West also offers a damning critique of the higher-ups who expected our warriors to act as nation-buildersÃ¢â ¬â •and whose failed strategy put American lives at unnecessary risk. Ã Â Each time a leader was struck down, another rose up to take his place. How does one man instill courage in another? What welded these men together as firmly as steel plates? Ã Â This remarkable book is the story of warriors caught between a maddening, unrealistic strategy and their unswerving commitment to the fight. Fearsome, inspiring, and poignant in its telling, One Million Steps is sure to become a classic, a unique and enduring testament to the American warrior spirit. Ã Â Praise for One Million Steps Ã Â Ã¢â ¬Å“West shows the reality of modern warfare in a way that is utterly gripping.Ã¢â ¬Â•Ã¢â ¬â •Max Boot, author of Invisible Armies Ã Â Ã¢â ¬Å“A gripping, boot-level account of Marines in Afghanistan during the bloody struggle with Taliban fighters.Ã¢â ¬Â•Ã¢â ¬â •Los Angeles Times Ã Â Ã¢â ¬Å“One Million Steps transcends combat narrative: It is an epic of contemporary small-unit combat.Ã¢â ¬Â•Ã¢â ¬â •Eliot A. Cohen, author of Supreme Command Ã Â Ã¢â ¬Å“A blistering assault on AmericaÃ¢â ¬â„¢s senior military leadership.Ã¢â ¬Â•Ã¢â ¬â •The Wall Street Journal Ã Â Ã¢â ¬Å“A heart-pounding portrayal . . . a compelling account of what these men endured.Ã¢â ¬Â•Ã¢â ¬â •The Washington Post Ã Â Ã¢â ¬Å“Stunning, sobering, and brilliantly written.Ã¢â ¬Â•Ã¢â ¬â •Newt Gingrich Ã Â Ã¢â ¬Å“One of the most intrepid military journalists, Bing West, delivers a heart-wrenching account of one platoonÃ¢â ¬â„¢s fight.Ã¢â ¬Â•Ã¢â ¬â •Bill Bennett, host of Morning in America Ã Â Ã¢â ¬Å“Bing West has reconfirmed his standing as one of the most intrepid and insightful

observers of AmericaÃ¢â ¬â„¢s wars. . . . One Million Steps reveals the essence of small-unit combat, the very soul of war.Ã¢â ¬Â•Ã¢â ¬â •The Weekly Standard Ã Â Ã¢â ¬Å“A searing read, but it is one that all Americans should undertake. We send our sons into battle, and few know what our warriors experience.Ã¢â ¬Â•Ã¢â ¬â •The Washington TimesFrom the Hardcover edition.

Book Information

File Size: 21327 KB

Print Length: 320 pages

Publisher: Random House (September 9, 2014)

Publication Date: September 9, 2014

Sold by:Ã Â Random House LLC

Language: English

ASIN: B00JCSCXS8

Text-to-Speech: Enabled

X-Ray: Enabled

Word Wise: Enabled

Lending: Not Enabled

Screen Reader: Supported

Enhanced Typesetting: Enabled

Best Sellers Rank: #144,279 Paid in Kindle Store (See Top 100 Paid in Kindle Store) #31 inÃ Â Kindle Store > Kindle eBooks > Nonfiction > Politics & Social Sciences > Politics & Government > Elections & Political Process > Leadership #55 inÃ Â Kindle Store > Kindle eBooks > History > Americas > United States > Military History > Afghan War #70 inÃ Â Kindle Store > Kindle eBooks > History > Americas > United States > Military History > Veterans

Customer Reviews

I have read books of this type of the World War II, Korea, Vietnam, Iraq, and Afghanistan. We, as citizens of these United States, must take action to support our veterans when we bring them home. Even when they look whole, they are still changed. Having seen the things they have seen, having taken lives, and having their brothers killed by their sides has changed them inside, often in ways they cannot recognize.This book draws you closely into the lives of a company of Marines during their seven month tour in the worst location in Afghanistan. At times they fight by day and return to their quarters at night to turn on their computers and communicate with wives or girlfriends back home. At other times they have no real electric power to use, no internet, no hot showers, eat MREs

(the current edition of C-rations), just fire pits to sit around and talk. Of course, and its a good thing they did. they shared what they saw and learned that day in combat, their awareness of the situation. In fact, I am using that where I work to improve our industrial safety performance, except we call it situational awareness. And, if we are not as good at it as we could be, we are seldom likely to suffer a serious injury, certainly not deat. For them, being less aware of their situation resulted in amputations, sometimes multiples, traumatic brain injuries, or death.These men were with the 3/5 Marines. They tried to live up to Eugene Sledge's legacy. If you want to know what that means, read "With the Old Breed." It's about WWII, the Pacific part of the war and the actions of the same unit there. Some of the horrors were the same, and so was the esprit.I liked this book. It's not an easy one to read. It will make you think a lot about the war we are in right now. It will make you think even more about getting more involved in other wars in the Middle East. It should make you think about how you should show your support for our warriors. Can you demonstrate against the fighting they are in the middle of and still show them support? That's a tough question. Think hard before you answer it.

From the standpoint of a retired mid-level CIA DO officer, this is an excellent narration of the Afghan War in Sangin District, Helmand Province. The USMC obviously allows Bing because of his Under Assistant Secretary role in the Reagan administration and his grunt background, easy and frequent access to this remote area. Could it be that he is a mouthpiece for the battalion and regimental commanders to express views they cannot say?? They couldn't criticize the President, Secretary of Defense, CENTCOM, and theater commanders as he does. If so, I applaud him.What was forgotten by two successive administrations is that you don't commit your national treasure (lives and money) unless your objective is to win. Also there was no appreciation of Afghanistan's history; it did in Alexander in c.330 BC, and the British twice in the 19th century. Liberal academia blamed the USG for its invasion after 9/11 for not engaging in nation building after the Afghan/Russian War, but that was why it was successful; its objective was to bleed the Russians and not establish a Jeffersonian democracy. Then 11 years later, we remembered Churchill's century old advice, and the CIA spent $7-8 million renting tribes to join and support the Northern Alliance in their fight against the Taliban and Al Qaida, which was successful. Then afterwards we loitered in country for 12 more years. Re the MAMs (military age males) making $10 a day in Sangin in the poppy agribusiness in 2011,when I was next door in Kandahar Prov in 2004, the then poppy wage was only $5 a day. I jokingly said that the USG could pay all the MAMs $10 a day not to join the Taliban and it would be a lot cheaper than what we were spending on nation building. In 2011 in this book's time, you would have to raise

that to $15 a day, but it would still be cheaper. Bing doesn't mention the Pentagon East type hqs that was built at Camp Leatherneck for millions of dollars and never used--no one wants to claim responsibility for that.As Bing points out, today's military volunteers are only a microcosm of our society unlike WWII. They're not our kids--they're your kids. Only returning to a draft will change that, and that's not going to happen. There should have been an original withdrawal plan for both Iraq and Afghanistan and there wasn't. They dragged on....The story of this platoon should serve as an object lesson to have definite goals in mind before committing your armed forces to war so that the inevitable casualties are not in vain or without purpose. Someone in the top of the chain of command should have pointed the realities of operating out of a cave in a hostile if not ambivalent environment then. The Marines can be proud they answered the call and performed heroically. but it would be better if they had not been placed in that situation.

An interesting look at a largely untold story of one of the deadliest battles in USMC history. The tales of valor make you so proud of American young men. The sad stories of loss and injury drive a strong sense of sorrow at the waste. Like most stories of heroic actions in battle, this is one is bittersweet - unimaginable courage coupled with horrific accounts of young lives lost and maimed for little return as a result of poor leadership at the highest levels of the US command structure.

A good book about a USMC platoon. It throws in some good statistics, has great narrative, and provides some good commentary on the war - though perhaps it is a bit unbalanced. Bing West definitely comes off as anti-Obama, or at least anti-Obama Afghanistan policy. That's fine, but like most critics no one can come up with a reasonable and feasible solution.What I found most astounding is that, at least for the platoon, the combat area was one of hundreds of meters to a few kilometers during the entire tour. It is amazing that the battlespace is so small in an age of stealth bombers that can take off from Missouri and drop bombs over Kabul or Baghdad and then return to the US.I have read a lot of books about the Iraq and Afghanistan wars, and this book fits comfortably among those narratives. It is not a memoir, but it is not a strategic study by a journalist or academic. If one is interested in these wars it is generally worthwhile to read all three of these types, as well as government and think tank studies.My final commentary is the US Army and USMC failed their soldiers in not developing better mine detection devices or countermeasures. Why not just have a 10 kg RV drive ahead of the squad to set off the IEDs? Even if you needed 500 of them, they would have been better than the dozens of legs and lives lost.

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