



Lions of Kandahar: The Story of a Fight Against All Odds

By Rusty Bradley, Kevin Maurer

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Includes a new Afterword by the authors

One of the most critical battles of the Afghan War is now revealed as never before. *Lions of Kandahar* is an inside account from the unique perspective of an active-duty U.S. Army Special Forces commander, an unparalleled warrior with multiple deployments to the theater who has only recently returned from combat there.

Southern Afghanistan was slipping away. That was clear to then-Captain Rusty Bradley as he began his third tour of duty there in 2006. The Taliban and their allies were infiltrating everywhere, poised to reclaim Kandahar Province, their strategically vital onetime capital. To stop them, the NATO coalition launched Operation Medusa, the largest offensive in its history. The battlefield was the Panjwayi Valley, a densely packed warren of walled compounds that doubled neatly as enemy bunkers, lush orchards, and towering marijuana stands, all laced with treacherous irrigation ditches. A mass exodus of civilians heralded the carnage to come.

Dispatched as a diversionary force in support of the main coalition attack, Bradley's Special Forces A-team and two others, along with their longtime Afghan Army allies, watched from across the valley as the NATO force was quickly engulfed in a vicious counterattack. Key to relieving it and calling in effective air strikes was possession of a modest patch of high ground called Sperwan Ghar. Bradley's small detachment assaulted the hill and, in the midst of a savage and unforgettable firefight, soon learned they were facing nearly a thousand seasoned fighters—from whom they seized an impossible victory.

Now Bradley recounts the whole remarkable story as it actually happened. The blistering trek across Afghanistan's infamous Red Desert. The eerie traces of the elusive Taliban. The close relations with the Afghan people and army, a primary mission focus. Sperwan Ghar itself: unremitting waves of fire from machine guns and rocket-propelled grenades; a targeted truck turned into an inferno; the death trap of a cut-off compound. Most important: the men, Americans and Afghans

alike—the “shaky” medic with nerves of steel and a surgeon’s hands in battle; the tireless sergeant who seems to be everywhere at once; the soft-spoken intelligence officer with laser-sharp insight; the diminutive Afghan commander with a Goliath-sized heart; the cool maverick who risks all to rescue a grievously wounded comrade—each unique, all indelible in their everyday exercise of extraordinary heroism.

Praise for *Lions of Kandahar*

“A raw and authentic war story about untamed Green Berets in action.”—**Dalton Fury, *New York Times* bestselling author of *Kill Bin Laden***

“A powerful and gripping account of a battle that helped shape the war in Afghanistan . . . With crisp writing and page-turning action, *Lions of Kandahar* is one of the best books written about the conflict.”—**Mitch Weiss, Pulitzer Prize-winning investigative journalist and co-author of *Tiger Force: A True Story of Men and War***

“One of the most important documents to emerge from the war in Afghanistan.”—***The Seattle Times***

“Powerful . . . a riveting account of a strategic battle that doesn’t glorify war or focus on heroic deeds . . . Make room on your military bookshelf for *Lions of Kandahar*.”—***San Antonio Express-News***

“Bradley takes the reader into battle.”—***Time***

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

A Letter from the Author

President Obama announced that 10,000 U.S. troops from Afghanistan will return home this year and another 23,000 will redeploy by summer 2012. For me, it wasn't an announcement. It was an order by my commander-in-chief and a decision well above my pay grade. Debates over troop levels and strategy are left to the men who wear stars on their uniforms or suits in Washington. My war is one that is fought every day like it is Sept. 12, 2001, whether I am in Afghanistan or not. As an Army officer, I watched, initially horrified, as the planes hit the World Trade Center and knew that I was going to war. I've done so five times. But my view has always been from the ground floor. I am the action arm of my commander-in-chief, not a policy maker. In the summer of 2006, my orders were simple: partner with the Afghan army and assist the Canadians as they launched a major NATO offensive through the Panjwayi Valley in southern Afghanistan during Operation Medusa. The mission didn't go as planned, and my fellow Green Berets and I, with our Afghan allies, seized a key hill--Sperwan Ghar--from Taliban and foreign fighters, taking the pressure off our Canadian allies trapped in the valley. Over the next eleven days, we held off wave after wave of Taliban fighters before we finally broke them. I spent the rest of that rotation building a base and establishing a series of checkpoints that attempted to secure the valley. We did the best we could to keep the lid on things in Afghanistan until the cavalry arrived. And they arrived last year. With the help of the U.S. troop surge, we were able to establish new footholds, consolidate our gains, and expand Afghan Security control while driving the Taliban from several of their critical sanctuaries, including the Panjwayi Valley. I returned to the valley last summer to assist in establishing security, development, and governance in the valley's villages. As part of a program focused on building up one village at a time, I helped coordinate aid and the training of local police from the district level with the goal of creating a stable local government that could eventually link in with the national one in Kabul. What our units did in 2006 is still a very critical part of the narrative there. Afghans know of the battle for Sperwan Ghar, still remember it, and still know me because of my thick gray beard. The outcome of the battle changed the way the Taliban operates. Where once they fought brazenly in the open, they now hide like cowards in among the Afghan people and fight with IEDs and suicide bombers. And they clearly know the difference between the Special Forces and conventional soldiers and give the "bearded ones" a wider berth. While the other parts of country are now under control of Afghan security forces, there is still very much a fight in the south. The Panjwayi and Zhari districts are key territory because many of the Taliban's leaders are landowners there. This is their center of gravity and the birthplace of their movement. So they are essentially fighting for their homeland in every sense of the word. It is here that the extra troops matter the most. This summer, the key battles and in some way the fate of the war will be decided on this same battlefield. I am often asked what I think we should do in Afghanistan. I have my opinions. But when I put on my uniform every morning, that opinion doesn't matter. I know only one thing: my mission was to go to southern Afghanistan, disrupt the Taliban, and assist the Afghan people in building a country. And I did that. Do troop levels matter? Absolutely. Every soldier, every commander, wants the best equipment and the most men. But I'll worry about troop levels when I have stars on my uniform. Right now my job is to execute the orders of those who do.

Review

“One of the most important documents to emerge from the war in Afghanistan.”—*The Seattle Times*

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“A raw and authentic war story about untamed Green Berets in action. Bradley and Maurer crush it! Mr. President, grab a copy—this is a sure-bet Special Forces exit strategy. Unleash more of these brave lions across Afghanistan and America will win this war.”—**Dalton Fury, *New York Times* bestselling author of *Kill Bin Laden: A Delta Force Commander’s Account of the Hunt for the World’s Most Wanted Man***

“A powerful and gripping account of a battle that helped shape the war in Afghanistan. But *Lions of Kandahar* is more than that. Major Rusty Bradley and Kevin Maurer give readers a stirring inside look at the day-to-day operations of a Special Forces team—and what it takes to defeat insurgents hell-bent on regaining control of Afghanistan. With crisp writing and page-turning action, *Lions of Kandahar* is one of the best books written about the conflict.”—**Mitch Weiss, Pulitzer Prize-winning investigative journalist and co-author of the critically acclaimed *Tiger Force: A True Story of Men and War***

“This is a riveting tale, told from the front lines of the secret war against the Taliban. *Lions of Kandahar* is the definitive account of a modern Special Forces mission—a must-read for anyone hoping to understand the harsh realities of the Afghan conflict.”—**David Zucchino, Pulitzer-Prize-winning journalist and author of *Thunder Run: The Armored Strike to Capture Baghdad***

“I have read this book three times and I am still chilled to the bone with every word. In *Lions of Kandahar* you will be riveted by the unabridged action of our real-life military heroes. It took a group of exceptional individuals to accomplish Operation Medusa. We as a nation can only pray we have half the guts and fortitude given selflessly every day on our behalf by the Army Special Forces.”—**Marshall R. Teague, actor; U.S. Navy (ret.)**

“The war in Afghanistan is made for Special Forces, but very little has been written about these soldiers since the initial attack on Afghanistan in 2001. Bradley and Maurer do a great job of showing how these elite units fight and why they are so important to the battle against the Taliban. *Lions of Kandahar* is a gripping, moving, and well-told war story.”—**Greg Jaffe, *Washington Post* reporter and co-author of *The Fourth Star: Four Generals and the Epic Struggle for the Future of the United States Army***

From the Hardcover edition.

About the Author

Major Rusty Bradley was wounded during the Battle of Sperwan Ghar in command of a Special Forces A-team, on his third combat tour as a Special Forces team leader. A native of North Carolina, he graduated from Mars Hill College and enlisted in the Army in 1993, serving as an infantryman for six years before earning his commission from Officer Candidate School in 1999.

Kevin Maurer has been embedded as a reporter with the U.S. Special Forces and 82nd Airborne Division in Afghanistan and Iraq more than a dozen times in the last five years.

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Users Review

From reader reviews:

Candy Dixon:

This Lions of Kandahar: The Story of a Fight Against All Odds are generally reliable for you who want to be a successful person, why. The reason of this Lions of Kandahar: The Story of a Fight Against All Odds can be one of the great books you must have is giving you more than just simple looking at food but feed you actually with information that possibly will shock your before knowledge. This book is definitely handy, you can bring it just about everywhere and whenever your conditions both in e-book and printed people. Beside that this Lions of Kandahar: The Story of a Fight Against All Odds forcing you to have an enormous of experience for instance rich vocabulary, giving you tryout of critical thinking that we all know it useful in your day pastime. So , let's have it and enjoy reading.

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