



In The Company of Soldiers: A Chronicle of Combat In Iraq

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During the recent war in Iraq, renowned historian Rick Atkinson was embedded with the 101st Airborne Division of the US forces. He had access to the headquarters command post and the top-secret plans tent and spent most days at the elbow of Major General David H. Petraeus as he directed attacks on the cities of Najaf, Karbala, Hilla and, ultimately, southern Baghdad. This short book, written with a strong first-person narrative, will not only provide a unique insight into the course of events; using the microcosm of the 101st, Atkinson will also reveal much about the contemporary US military and the soldiers who compose it. In his unique hands this book is set to become a classic of war journalism and the only book to buy for an insider's account of America's war in Iraq.

In The Company of Soldiers: A Chronicle of Combat In Iraq Details

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Á says

I found the book interesting, though not as engaging as *Generation Kill*. I suspect in part this is due to the strategic-level perspective of much of the book. I found my interest to be greatest when he was discussing his experiences and those of the people around him. It may be that for those that followed the invasion, the strategy is well known and what's interesting is the experience of the people, American and Iraqi, living through it.

I think the book also paints an interesting view of General Petraeus currently in charge of CENTCOM, who is being courted by the Republican Party as a potential presidential or vice-president candidate. Notable in Atkinson's depiction of Petraeus was his ambition.

Certainly this is well worth the read. I'm looking forward to the conclusion of the Liberation Trilogy written by Atkinson.

Tom Gase says

This was okay, but I liked Atkinson's books on World War II a lot better. This book is basically a glimpse into Major General David H. Petraeus as he directed attacks on the cities of Najaf, Karbala, Hilla and, ultimately, southern Baghdad between Feb and April in 2003. I thought this book possibly needed a few more maps in them, maybe every chapter or something like that. Hard to get into this one as it's just a bio almost on Petraeus before he was involved in a scandal a few years down the road. I think Atkinson does a very good job reporting, it's just the story of the book didn't always grab my attention. I read this during the Veteran's Day holiday and I'm glad I did, but there are better books by the award-winning author. Just my opinion.

Marc says

An excellent description of war from the perspective of upper military command, written by a Pulitzer prize winning journalist and military historian when the author was embedded with the 101st airborne division as it invaded Iraq in 2003. As *A Man Called Intrepid* describes world war II spying from the inside at the upper levels, this book does the same for war.

Joseph says

This is a great book about the behind the scenes of what leads up to the Gulf War (post 9/11) and when the soldiers are waiting to be sent on a mission. Rick tells the story of what is being done at the highest level for the campaign being at the side of Major General David H. Petraeus. He was there for 2 months and given access to all the meetings that were done.

This was well written and I highly recommend it.

Lucas says

The author shadows David Petraeus during the invasion of Iraq, and after each recounted episode contrasts the competence and integrity of the soldiers with that of the Bush administration.

Lots of minutiae about somewhat random things, like discussions over whether to tape or paint helicopter blades to protect them from the sand. Those particular details weren't completely random, the vulnerability of helicopters to ground fire and sand is mentioned repeatedly.

The story of the looting is interesting - in another book it is mentioned that U.S. soldiers were authorized to shoot looters while in Haiti (or another country?) in the 90's, and there was therefore no looting. In Iraq no authorization existed, and there was a high level acceptance of the looting of Baath party buildings which degenerated into the looting of anything by the time that filtered to the street level. The author talks about painstaking attention made by the military to not damaging city infrastructure (the more they damage the longer they have to stay around afterward to see it rebuilt), but then the looters ended up destroying it in the anarchy following the invasion.

Al Lock says

Well written within the confines of what it is, which Rick Atkinson does a great job of addressing - this is primarily a first-hand account of a journalist who was embedded with the 101st Airborne Division and was directly around General Petraeus primarily.

Good look at the deployment of an Army Division (in this case, an Air Assault Division) to war, the problems faced, the adjustments to combat and the fog of war.

Recommended.

Dan Downing says

C.J Chivers just released his book "Fighters", which immediately landed on my shelves. He has been with soldiers in Iraq and Afghanistan. I recently read a couple of books by Kate Atkinson, and a while back Rick Atkinson's brilliant WWII trilogy. Thus I decided karma was telling me to read an earlier Rick Atkinson book about his time with the 101st Airborne Division in Iraq before tackling Chivers.

Looking back from a distance of 15 years the combat experiences and revelations are as interesting because of the later careers of several of the players as they are for the development of a quick entry and 'conquering' of Iraq. Of course, anyone who can claim sanity knows Rumsfeld, Bush, Colin Powell, the CIA, NSA and most of the spook squad were out and out liars who embraced incompetence to get us into the Iraq war to begin with, and dolts such as L. Paul Bremer III continued the saga of idiocy, leading to a long and bloody ordeal.

Nevertheless, the story of how our military planned and executed the siege of a foreign country a third of the way around the world enlightens the mind, even if one followed the events as they unfolded. The eyes and

the mind of a veteran reporter who is an award-winning military writer make this an engaging experience. Recommended.

Ivan says

FIRST LINE REVIEW: "They found the sergeant's body at midmorning on Saturday, April 12, 2003, just where an Iraqi boy had said it would be; in a shallow grave in south Baghdad, near the Highway 8 cloverleaf known to the U. S. Army as Objective Curley." With clarity, compassion and intelligence, one of my favorite war historian's (Atkinson) helped me better understand the arduous journey undertaken by the 101st in the initial sally into Iraq. As one of the most prestigious embedded journalists, he had constant access to Gen. Patreous, the result of which is a rich and sobering account of a war we should never have started.

Christopher Blain says

I loved the book. I was In D company 3/502INF 101st and I can tell you it is correct in every way. From those cold nights at Campbell loading trains to the hot hell of Karbala, it is those little details that civilians see as boring that saves our lives. Moving the 101st from Ft Campbell to Kuwait in a month and then invading a country is no easy task. 99% of what we do is boring, but it is that 1% that they write books about. We sit in that hot seat and make those life and death commands when others do not or will not. I can tell you it is safer to read the book than live it. It was one hell of a ride and I do miss being in the company of those soldiers.

Michael Holm says

I am a sucker for military history, especially modern warfare. This book describes the power of the US armed forces against an inferior military. The invasion of Iraq in 2003 was not a contest of equals. Weaknesses and disadvantages of US methods are revealed. Our soldiers and airmen were valiant and victorious. But true triumph eluded them because of the occupation. I also learned the Middle Eastern preferred methods of fighting, probably all that is available to them because of their technological weakness. Note the use of cell phones to remedy the lack of radios. In retrospect, the US enjoyed an empty sense of victory. The claimed weapons of mass destruction were not discovered. When will the US learn to stay out of foreign conflicts which are relatively minor? If we weaned ourselves of foreign oil, we could afford to stay out of these eternal conflicts..

Keith says

Rick Atkinson's book, In The Company of Soldiers, is a well written chronicle of the opening days of the war in Iraq as seen from the Division level. I appreciated Atkinson's understanding of the military in general and his knowledge of military history in particular. That said, there were a couple times when I had to question his research, the most glaring to me being his incorrect definition of a FARP and his discussion of the "obtuseness" of naming a FARP after a gas station - while invading a country where many people believed the invasion was about oil. Just asking a couple questions of someone in the Army Aviation community could have given the correct definition and he would have found out that FARP naming

conventions often use a fuel station theme. Minor discrepancies aside, I found this to be an accurate representation of the US Army and thoroughly enjoyed listening to this audio book.

Jay Wright says

Much of the book is as good as his series on World War II, but he gets political in several places. It detracts from the straight forward prose that is geared to facts. His love of Petraeus is evident and isn't it ironic that his liberal constituency brought Petraeus down?

Clyde says

In *In the Company of Soldiers* Rick Atkinson chronicles his experiences as an embedded reporter with the 101st Airborne Division (air assault) during the Iraq war in 2003. His book brings back the concerns and fears of that war that have become somewhat blurred by time. I didn't find this book to be quite as engrossing as Atkinson's earlier *The Long Gray Line*, perhaps because *In the Company of Soldiers* is in fact a chronicle - a diary of events as it were -- without a strong core theme. Other than the war itself and the accounts of warriors doing their jobs, the most important thing in this book is Atkinson's portrayal of General David H. Petraeus. In fact it was the recent high-profile scandal leading to Petraeus's resignation that prompted me to read this book. The complex man Atkinson shows us is enigmatic -- driven and driving, highly intelligent, obsessive over details, hyper competitive, intense, honorable, and at times humorous. Leadership is both a trade and an obsession for him. That portrayal and the tale of day to day life with soldiers make this a good book. I recommend it to those interested in the military, the Iraq war, or General Petraeus.

Nick Hernandez says

Very well written account of a benign period in war. I say benign, because this reporter was not on the front lines nor in harms way (many other books give that perspective). But, he does a great job detailing what life is like on a daily basis in the Iraq war and he mostly avoids politics. The only political stance the author takes is in the Afterward. The Afterward has nothing to do with the author's time in Iraq and is much of a political regurgitation of what was on the news. Again, outside of that last section, the author's firsthand account of his life in the desert was very detailed and well documented.

Matthew Kremer says

Good story about the 101st Airborne's deployment into Iraq in 2003 under the command of Gen. Petraeus. Interesting for a Soldier who deployed at the same time into the same area and now reading a higher level observation of the things I saw on the ground. Lack of communication from the top down provided many moments of frustration that could have been avoided if "in order to" would have been used in orders. Very interesting read.
