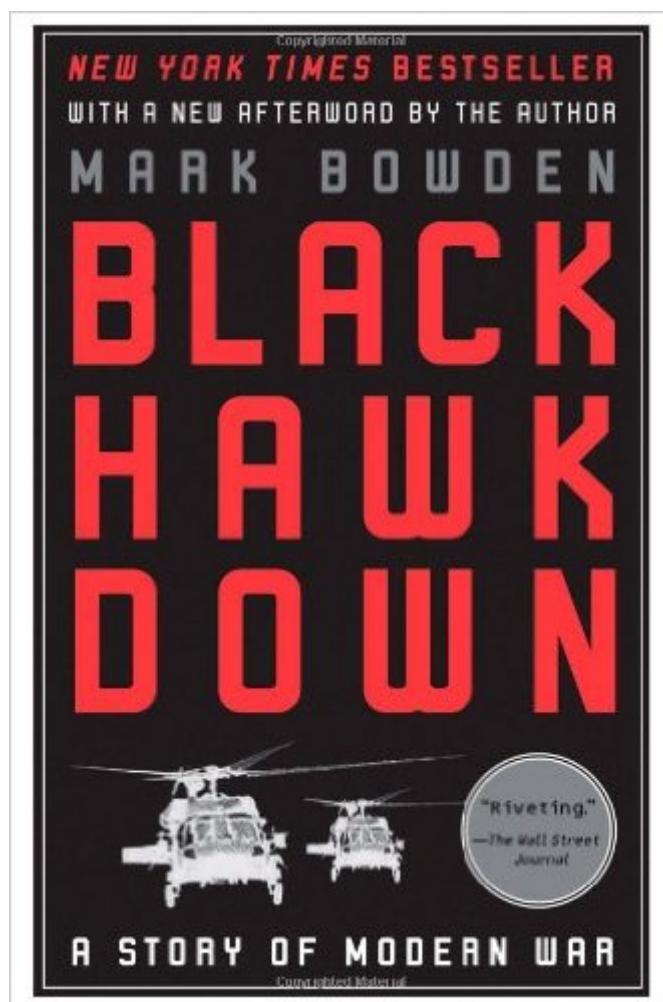


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Black Hawk Down: A Story Of Modern War



Synopsis

Already a classic of war reporting and now reissued as a Grove Press paperback, *Black Hawk Down* is Mark Bowden's brilliant account of the longest sustained firefight involving American troops since the Vietnam War. On October 3, 1993, about a hundred elite U.S. soldiers were dropped by helicopter into the teeming market in the heart of Mogadishu, Somalia. Their mission was to abduct two top lieutenants of a Somali warlord and return to base. It was supposed to take an hour. Instead, they found themselves pinned down through a long and terrible night fighting against thousands of heavily armed Somalis. The following morning, eighteen Americans were dead and more than seventy had been badly wounded. Drawing on interviews from both sides, army records, audiotapes, and videos (some of the material is still classified), Bowden's minute-by-minute narrative is one of the most exciting accounts of modern combat ever written—a riveting story that captures the heroism, courage, and brutality of battle.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

So you've never been in combat. Come to Mogadishu. Maybe you're the rear detachment company clerk who was called forward due to an injury. Join the D-Boys and Rangers on a quick raid gone wrong. Fast-rope into a crowded African city on a Sunday afternoon and smell, taste, hear, and touch the reality of true combat. Test your soul; what would you do if you were surrounded by thousands of deadly Somalis only miles from safety in the heart of their territory and there is a *BLACK HAWK DOWN*? Mark Bowden has taken his award winning series of newspaper articles written for the *Philadelphia Inquirer* and turned them into a must-read classic for all military professionals. He definitely took a modest assignment and overachieved; we are the beneficiaries.

His detailed account of the Battle of the Black Sea (Mogadishu: 3-4 October 1993) is destined to occupy the bookshelves of every military professional or would-be warrior. Devour and enjoy Black Hawk Down. This book is not about your Grandfather or Father's war. This is about modern war involving many soldiers still on active duty. It's not about destroying tanks from 3,000 meters away. It's about close combat when the rules of engagement cease to have relevance and survival requires immediate instinctive response. This book is a crystal ball on future urban warfare and a cautionary note for contentious peacekeeping operations. The devil is in the details and you will not want for details. The gore, frustrations, disagreements, mistrusts, illusions, misconceptions, ramifications, difficulties, cowardice, and heroics are displayed for all to see. Sure there is some hype and inaccuracy, but no interesting microscopic analysis can exist without such blemishes.

I read a fair amount of historical non-fiction and was taught throughout high school to think critically when reading. Check sources, check author's tone, point of the writing, points of view being used, context, and so forth. Apparently Mark Bowden, the author, comes from the same school of thought. He writes a thorough and genuine account of a sadly-ignored incident in US history. I can recall the newspaper accounts of the time, wondering what we were doing there and why, after taking such incredible beatings, we were leaving. Rather than do the research to find out why, Mr. Bowden has compiled this book, which rightfully deserves its place on any historian's bookshelf. Bowden's accounting of the events and context are flawless. His research is uncommonly thorough, and given the opportunity to write the first really comprehensive accounting of the events, he makes the most of it. His attention to detail, his recreation of the timeline, and his notes are worthy of emulation by future students of history. All that is nothing without good writing, and Bowden keeps a reader locked into the story. As hard as some of it is to read because of the imagery and concomitant emotional responses, Bowden leads you through the battles at ground level, at eye level from helicopter platforms, at screen level from command centers. At the end of the book one wonders how you survive the reading; how much worse to have been there in it? I was exhausted mentally, and therein lies the demanding aspect of the book. So much goes on, so many players become involved, that a cheat sheet and glossary of some terms would've helped immensely. Even a cast of characters would've been of some utility, but eventually, I just bore down and focused.

Black Hawk Down: A Story of Modern War, by Mark Bowden, is an in-the-streets account of the now infamous seventh mission of Task Force Ranger and Delta Force in Mogadishu, Somalia. Militarily, the mission was a success; politically, it was a disaster. Black Hawk Down was recently released as

a major motion picture. I haven't (yet) seen the film, but even to those who have I strongly suggest reading this book. In addition to being made as a movie, an even earlier version of this book appeared as a series of articles in the Philadelphia Inquirer. Additionally, there is a "companion documentary" (Somalia: Good Intentions, Deadly Results), a shorter version of which has appeared on CNN. Of course, the most famous media related to this story is the news footage of the dead American soldiers being dragged through the streets by angry mobs; second to that would be the image of Black Hawk pilot Mike Durant's smashed face in the video made of him by his captors. Both of these are around; if you really need a reminder, try Google. In the 1990's, the United States found itself in three separate conflicts in (at least partially) Muslim lands. The Gulf War was a conventional military venture, the UN missions in the former Yugoslavia represented a basic-albeit convoluted-peace-keeping venture. The nation-building force in Somalia after the initial famine-busting mission heavily involved special operations. The first sent ripples among the military theorists of nations across the world; the second involved the civilizationally odd American preference to support the Muslim community over that of Orthodox and Western forces; the third was seen as a victory of sorts by Third Worlders and Islamists who drew from it the lesson that America could be shocked into backing out of a conflict.

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