



No True Glory: A Frontline Account of the Battle for Fallujah

Francis J. West Jr.

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"This is the face of war as only those who have fought it can describe it."—Senator John McCain

Fallujah: Iraq's most dangerous city unexpectedly emerged as the major battleground of the Iraqi insurgency. For twenty months, one American battalion after another tried to quell the violence, culminating in a bloody, full-scale assault. Victory came at a terrible price: 151 Americans and thousands of Iraqis were left dead.

The epic battle for Fallujah revealed the startling connections between policy and combat that are a part of the new reality of war.

The Marines had planned to slip into Fallujah "as soft as fog." But after four American contractors were brutally murdered, President Bush ordered an attack on the city—against the advice of the Marines. The assault sparked a political firestorm, and the Marines were forced to withdraw amid controversy and confusion—only to be ordered a second time to take a city that had become an inferno of hate and the lair of the archterrorist al-Zarqawi.

Based on months spent with the battalions in Fallujah and hundreds of interviews at every level—senior policymakers, negotiators, generals, and soldiers and Marines on the front lines—*No True Glory* is a testament to the bravery of the American soldier and a cautionary tale about the complex—and often costly—interconnected roles of policy, politics, and battle in the twenty-first century.

From the Hardcover edition.

No True Glory: A Frontline Account of the Battle for Fallujah Details

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From Reader Review No True Glory: A Frontline Account of the Battle for Fallujah for online ebook

Jeff Brunell says

I was 17 when the siege of Fallujah was beginning in 2004. As I graduated High School I paid a little more attention to the news as I had friends going into the Marine Corps and being deployed. Admittedly I wanted to read this book because after the war I had no idea about our strategy with the city or the politics involving it. I just knew that even today in 2018 "Fallujah" is a synonym often used for a hard fight or quest. "It's not exactly Fallujah" has been used to describe an easy situation, for example.

I think the book needs to be updated to reflect present-day events. General Mattis is now the SECDEF. Col Dunford is now the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs. Zarqawi was killed in an airstrike a couple of years after the USMC swept Fallujah, and I was absolutely stunned to learn that Sadr is now a politician in Iraq.

I loved how the book would describe the political situations in one chapter and then seemingly in the next it would discuss a very detailed, squad-level minute by minute account of house clearings and clashes with the insurgents.

I also didn't realize how much politics interfered with the US strategy. From the mainland perspective, given only what was prescribed from the media, I had thought that it was just a slow process to weed out the insurgents and train the Iraqi army. I failed to realize at the time that most of the Iraqi army truly didn't pledge any loyalty to the cause and that we were in a country that was essentially in a power vacuum. It seemed that most of the citizens of Iraq just assumed that as soon as the US left it would return to the same old tribal and religious rule that it had for centuries (and they were right I guess), and that caused a general apathy towards making a stand to better their own country as they were afraid of the consequences. Mr. West was correct in that the greatest asset the insurgents had was intimidation of the general population. I found myself putting down the book and wondering how strategists today battle such situations.

Jack Pando says

Bing West explores the strategy and history that lead to Operation Phantom Fury, the Marines push to capture the city of Fallujah. It truly catches the many mistakes the U.S. Military and government made throughout the planning process. The first attempt was stalled by a long one-sided cease fire. To fix the violence the U.S. wanted to send in the Iraqi national guard, but no unit was ready for the fierce fighting in the city. Finally the military made a decision to send in the former Iraqi army, the Fallujah Brigade. This decision was made without consulting civilian leaders. Unfortunately, the Fallujah Brigade held loyalties towards the insurgency creating more violence within the city walls. All this led to the final push that destroyed the city and killed and wounded many Americans and Iraqis.

What I liked about this book was that it not only critiqued the government but also the decisions the military made. However, it does make the Marines seem flawless and knights in shining armor. And is unapologetic for the violence the U.S. caused in the city.

The conclusion of the book wanted us to remember the Marines and soldiers who fought as warriors and not victims of a war. But throughout the book he kept reiterating that the bad decisions made by the hire ups

were killing Americans.

Christina says

"...let slip the dogs of war." Bing West has his finger on the pulse of the Corps with this one. Some of my buddies were in the battle for Fallujah in '04 and have given this book their seal of approval. Doesn't get more authentic than that.

Carol Storm says

One of the best books ever written about Marines in combat. Captures the culture of the Corps in peace as well as in war. Provides background on Fallujah, the terrain, the culture, the history. A must read for serious students of modern history, the Iraq War, and the United States Marine Corps.

Erikhart Hart says

No True Glory provides a concise account of both battles for the Iraqi city of Fallujah, in April 2004 and December of 2004 respectively. West is an excellent author for this subject matter, providing a description from both the personal and tactical Lance Corporal while relating the operational and strategic context between events on the ground and on the home front.

Unfortunately, aside from the heroic sacrifices and mastery of modern urban combat displayed by our Marine Corps, the lesson that remains unlearned by national leadership is that without a proper strategic objective, tactical gains will be forfeit, and left to recapture at precious cost. Excellent read.

James says

Bing West served as a Marine officer in Vietnam, then moved on to journalism. Here he accompanied some Marine units during the battle of Falujah and offered both his day-to-day account of their experiences and his observations on the higher level political maneuverings that shaped the events they lived through.

Max Andrew says

5 stars- what more can I say. A powerful book.

Tin Wee says

Another book I was inspired to read after FIASCO. This book outlines the consequences of policy screw ups on the average frontline grunt, and how a war changed because warriors were not allowed to fight as they were meant to because of other policy concerns. The takeaway of this book for me is that the heroism of many of the marines has been overshadowed by the american media which chose to focus on the family tragedies of the deaths of the marines, instead of their heroism in the field. As with the vietnam war, once again, the overall war, which should be characterised by the heroism and guts of the average american trooper is lost, because the americans may have won the battles, but they lost the media war. This, I feel, is the greatest tragedy.

Mark says

I picked this up at the National Museum of the Marine Corps near Quantico, VA last weekend.

A detailed and in-depth account of the Marine's experiences in Fallujah, Iraq in 2004. I loved the matter of fact style and the Marine's eye view that West uses to tell his story. Part personal narrative from the combatants point of view and part historical narrative of the military and civilian leaders, their decision making, and the operations as they unfolded. West is quite confident that his opinions are correct - maybe even strident at some points but, his story is a good one and he tells it in a way that is compelling. Once again we learn about war from the perspective of the Marine on the ground who is merely there to do a job - to serve, and how that job - as much as these Marines would wish otherwise - always ends up terribly politicized. Read about how the politicians initially called for the Marines to "take" Fallujah overwhelmingly and immediately after the American contractors were killed and hung from the bridge in town, despite the Marine's initial misgivings (they were practicing established counter-insurgency techniques and wanted time for these techniques to pan out). When orders came to attack, the Marines did what Marines do best only to be called off mid operation because of the political fall out from the unsavory images beamed around the world. This is another reminder of the terrible costs of unleashing our combat power and how these decisions should be made carefully and then once made, should be carried through to completion.

If our leaders are going to choose to use our military tool, they need to use it as a last resort and then they need to practice a certain amount of "nose holding" because it's going to get messy and ugly. If they are unwilling to offend anyone - including the Arab media which has huge built-in sympathies to anyone we may be fighting in the middle east - then they'd better not turn lose the dogs of war.

The author does a nice job of telling a compelling story about a truly amazing group of Americans (the USMC) in a very sticky situation. No True Glory is a compelling read for anyone interested in digging into the details of the war in Iraq.

Pat says

I was there for part of this battle (in 2004). This book details all the battles surrounding what was once the most dangerous city in Iraq.

Scott says

Extremely well told story of the Battle for Fallujah. The first and second battle for Fallujah, which took place in April 04 and November 04 respectively. Bing West puts you into battle with the Marines and tells numerous harrowing tales of frontline bravery and valor. Bing West also tells of the events that occurred behind the scenes and the causes and propellants of the battle and of the political alliances, betrayals and compromises that shaped the battle and caused it to be split up into two phases instead of one decisive blow that would have ended the insurgency in one swift stroke of US military might. Bing West also does a good job of setting the stage for the battle by explaining what led up to and the aftermath of the battle, as well as the peripheral effect the battle had on the overall war, public opinion of the war and Iraq as a whole. Highly recommended for anyone interested in history, military or war or a good fast paced action filled read.

Chrissy says

This book was a good account of the battle for Fallujah. I enjoyed the fact that it mixed a look into the higher command and political aspects along with a look into the frontline men and events. In my opinion that is the ideal style because it gives you the context and reasons why everything is happening while also giving you an inside look into the "trenches" that humanizes the events. The maps and outline of people involved were useful references to go back to while reading. This was an easy to read account that conveyed the events and their significance well, but it did lack a certain pop in my opinion that would have merited 5 stars. Nonetheless it is a strong 4 star read, and I would recommend it to anyone interested in the battle.

Frank says

Bing West gives a glimpse into Anbar province, Iraq as it was in 2003-2005, during 20 months of attempts to stop, or even slow, the violence in that region. The author served as a Marine in Vietnam and was Assistant Secretary of Defense in the Reagan years. He interviewed numerous soldiers and Marines to put together sometimes street by street accounts.

I was struck by the way that many smart folks tried plans to work the problem only to be held up, pulled back, and then forced forward by political pressure that had nothing to do with the reality on the ground. West is interested in showing individual acts of bravery in the midst of sometimes chaotic events and he does this well. He routinely shows the pointlessness of how many Iraqis died in the fighting, sent forward poorly armed and seldom trained to shoot at soldiers who would have to then return fire, often easily cutting down life. At other times, better trained insurgents would coordinate ambushes with equally devastating effects against coalition forces.

Overall, his point is not so different from the conclusion of Michael Moore in Fahrenheit 911. Though I suspect there is much on which the two would disagree, both West and Moore view with great seriousness any decision to send men and women into harms way on behalf of others. Those sent to kill or die on our behalf ask only that the cause be worth the risk.

I found No True Glory to be a compelling account of the war in Iraq as it played itself out on the ground in Fallujah.

Elijus Kniežauskas says

Pradžioje l?ta, nuobodi ir sunki, bet po to ciki piki

Mike says

In “The Iliad” a warrior in the front ranks turned to his companions and said, “Let us win glory, for ourselves, or yield it to others.” For Greek warriors, there was no true glory if they were not remembered afterward in poem or song. There will be no true glory for our soldiers in Iraq until they are recognized not as victims, but as aggressive warriors. Stories of their bravery deserved to be recorded and read by the next generation. Unsung, the noblest deed will die.

Those stories are recorded in No True Glory: A Frontline Account of the Battle for Fallujah. A Star for every brave warrior here. Read and pass these deeds on to the next generation. A must read for any student of war and for any who want a better picture of what happened in Iraq.

Bing West gives you a lot of action at the squad, company, regiment level but mixes in timely pieces of the higher level machinations and confusion. You can't understand how Fallujah happened the way it did without seeing how it fit in a bigger picture. I admire how he explains all the military and political forces in play. He is very fair in his assessment and mostly just gives you the facts and lets you make your own judgment.

Several things stand out but especially the Marines, from the generals down to the corporals and privates. They demonstrated how they can be your best friend or worst enemy. I also like that West portrayed the opposition clearly.
