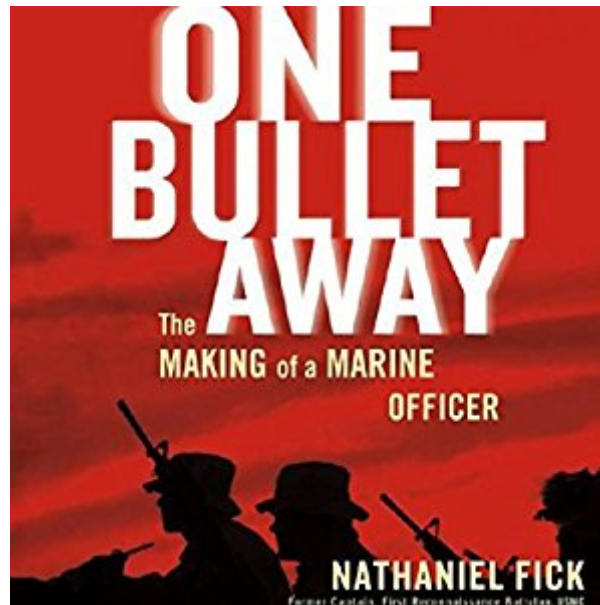




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One Bullet Away: The Making Of Marine Officer



Synopsis

If the Marines are the few, the proud, Recon Marines are the fewest and the proudest. Nathaniel Fick's career begins with a hellish summer at Quantico, after his junior year at Dartmouth. He leads a platoon in Afghanistan just after 9/11 and advances to the pinnacle "Recon" two years later, on the eve of war with Iraq. His vast skill set puts him in front of the front lines, leading twenty-two Marines into the deadliest conflict since Vietnam. He vows to bring all his men home safely, and to do so he'll need more than his top-flight education. Fick unveils the process that makes Marine officers such legendary leaders and shares his hard-won insights into the differences between military ideals and military practice, which can mock those ideals. In this deeply thoughtful account of what it's like to fight on today's front lines, Fick reveals the crushing pressure on young leaders in combat. Split-second decisions might have national consequences or horrible immediate repercussions, but hesitation isn't an option. One Bullet Away never shrinks from blunt truths, but ultimately it is an inspiring account of mastering the art of war. --This text refers to the Paperback edition.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I listened to the 16.5 hour long unabridged edition of this book narrated by Andy Paris. The last paragraph of this review focuses on that production specifically. 4 stars: A straight-forward account of Marine combat in Afghanistan and Iraq from the POV of a Jr Officer. Nate Fick was a main character portrayed in HBO's 2008 miniseries GENERATION KILL (based on Evan Wright's 2004 memoir of the same name). This memoir was written before the miniseries

but after Wright's account, in 2005. It covers his introduction into the Marine Corps, deployment to Afghanistan, subsequent training as a Recon Marine and then his role as an Lt in the 2003 invasion of Iraq. Fick is a capable writer and his story doesn't simply cover the same ground covered in GK. You learn that he scored expert on the rifle range, was a weapons platoon commander, underwent varying rigorous courses of special forces-esque training and you also get a lot more information on lesser known members of the Recon Platoon he leads into Iraq. For example, Gunny Wynn is a much more significant character in the last half of Fick's account due to his role in the unit organization. Fick is able to portray the demand and stress associated with small unit leadership and his boot camp and advanced training segments are more interesting than other accounts I've read, but this account is a more straight-forward, almost sterile one. It isn't devoid of opinions or personal reflection, but that's not the focus of his account. This is not necessarily a drawback, but it makes for a less riveting combat account when Fick finds himself in the thick of the fighting. Instead of a blow-by-blow combat account, we're given one about leading competent men into modern warfare which, despite the subpar decision making skills of some of his superiors, sees him and his men through two different stints in combat without any KIAs. However this does make the book less compelling ultimately, and I also felt that his training portion of the memoir, though better than others was still a bit bloated and could have been a bit shorter. But these cons are drastically outweighed by the pros of Fick's account, making it stand on its own as a story of the Wars on Terror, apart from Wright's and later the miniseries. I also feel it is one of the best officer accounts published about this conflict, hence my scoring it 4/5 stars. In terms of recommendations I'd say check out Wright's book, though it is from the perspective of an embedded journalist. Also check out the miniseries because it is brilliantly made, acted and produced by the people behind THE WIRE, too. Concerning modern combat memoir recommendations: the best one so far is still HOUSE TO HOUSE by David Bellavia and the best officer account is LIONS OF KANDAHAR. There are many accounts out there and I have a listmania ranking them if you're interested. As for the audiobook: I got a copy of the unabridged audiobook on tape read by Andy Paris. Paris reads the book well, if a bit dry but he changes up his voice acting for different characters though he sticks to the same tempo throughout all the different settings. The abridged version is read by Fick himself but I haven't listened to it and read somewhere that Fick himself wasn't happy with how the abridged book was edited.

An excellent book. From the standpoint of an ordinary officer on Platoon level leading his unit in

combat, and what they experienced - from beginning to end. Includes the variety of experience and attitudes they encountered with Iraqi civilians, many of who had been none too thrilled with Saddam and the Baathists who ruled Iraq. For all the 'major media' portrayals and critiques of the situation, our policies that got us there, etc., this is a side of the story 'on the ground', by the guys we (or Bush ...take your pick) sent to fight the war that SHOULD BE known and understood. His unit was better prepared, so suffered fewer casualties, than many others in Iraq - but you can still come close to understanding the price that was paid (or prices). What a shame that our bumbling leadership DIDN'T EVEN BEGIN to adequately plan for 'what to do' for stabilizing and restoring a capable government in Iraq after we had 'won the war' ...that's my thought, not necessarily his. We did that in Europe and Japan after World War II (not easy in any event) "but really fell flat this time around.

This is an amazing book highlighting the difficult road of going from ordinary college graduate to the super ordinary life of a marine officer, and then to war. This book was suggested to me by my son who has completed college, Officer Candidate School, The Basic School and is currently in MOS tank school for United States Marines. His statement to me was "this is remarkably accurate ". I found the book interesting, scary, and enhancing my already high regard for the marines and especially those that choose to lead as officers. This book also serves to help us focus on a difficult part of our country history, specifically Iraq and Afghanistan invasions. And the reintroduction of our soldiers into society. I recommend this book and say to captain Fick, Semper Fidelis.

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