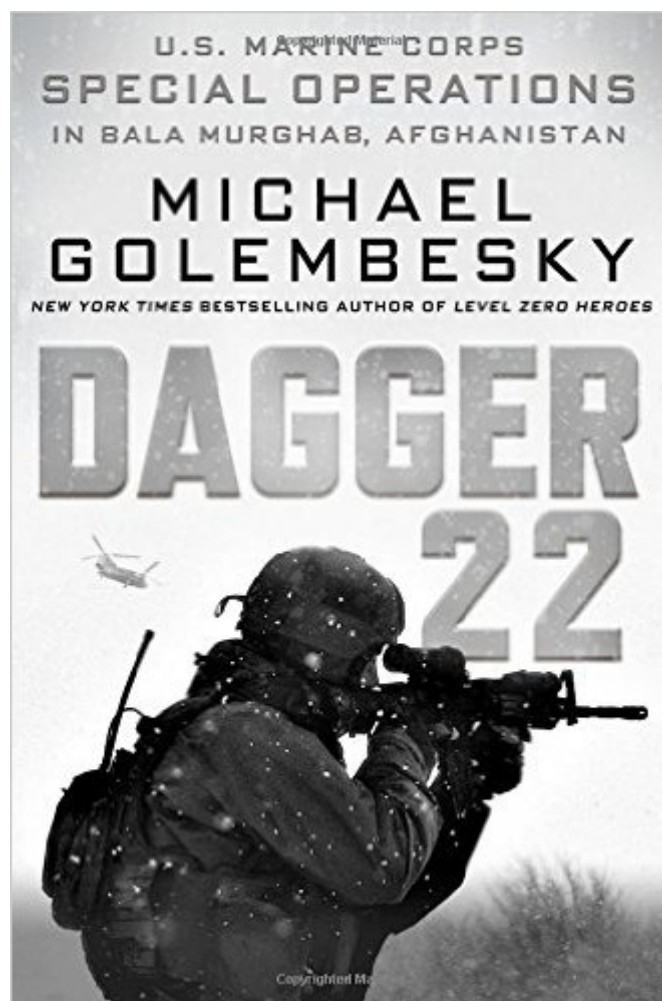


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Dagger 22: U.S. Marine Corps Special Operations In Bala Murghab, Afghanistan



Synopsis

The sequel to New York Times bestseller *Level Zero Heroes*, Michael Golembesky's bestselling account of Marine Special Operations Team 8222 in Bala Murghab, Afghanistan, was just the beginning for these now battle-hardened special operations warriors. The unforgiving Afghan winter has settled upon the 22 men of Marine Special Operations Team 8222, callsign Dagger 22, in the remote and hostile river valley of Bala Murghab, Afghanistan. The Taliban fighters in the region would have liked nothing more than to once again go dormant and rest until the new spring fighting season began. No chance of that—this winter would be different. Along with Afghan and International Security Forces (NATO), the Marines of Dagger 22 continued their fight throughout the harsh winter to shape the battlefield before the Afghan ground began to thaw. From one firefight to the next, the noose began to tighten around the village of Daneh Pasab and the Taliban command cell operating there. On April 6, 2010, a ground force consisting of U.S. Army Special Forces, Afghan Commandos and Marine Corps special operations conducted a night assault to destroy the heavily entrenched Taliban force, breaking their grip on the valley and stopping the spring offensive before it even began. But nothing in Bala Murghab comes easily as combat operations wear on the operators of Dagger 22 as they lean on each other once again in order to complete their mission in one of the most brutal environments on earth.

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Customer Reviews

My most enjoyable reads occur when the author is able to paint a picture in my mind of both the characters involved and the environment that they are operating in. Michael Golembesky uses the

smart approach of including indices identifying the main characters involved, the military acronyms used, and maps detailing the various skirmish areas. Being able to refer to these three indices allowed me to keep up with the action and gave me the opportunity to run alongside he and his compatriots while they maneuvered in Afghanistan, one of the strangest (alternately horrible and beautiful) environments in the world. "Dagger 22" spares no punches on explaining what our troops do in Afghanistan and specifically shows the reader how NATO forces collaborate and combine forces and materials of war to recover areas previously controlled by the Taliban. This has been a brutal war against battle-hardened criminals who have the advantage of fighting on their own soil, wreaking their own brand of havoc, and then being able to disappear into the local populations. They also have the benefit of knowing that our politics often dictate what our soldiers are allowed to do (and not do) in the field. This includes the dictum that our troops are not allowed to fire on any unarmed person, even though they might previously have been seen carrying a weapon or had just planted an IED. Having to watch the enemy disappear back into the landscape without being able to engage them is extremely demoralizing. How our fighters are able to adhere to these rules just amazes me. Michael Golembesky sets the stage and describes the action with mainly short and terse writing, using humor that is both cynical and sarcastic, to give us a feel for how our combatants feel and act.

I have yet to read any military biography books that disappoint me. I am a fan of this genre, and this book is no exception. It is well-written, with many, many details included that help to insert the reader into the difficult and dangerous scenarios described in the book. There are no dull parts in this book, though there are many dull points in the lives of these marines stationed in Afganistan. The book gives an accurate portrayal of just how hard their jobs are, and makes me grateful for their service. Our men serving in the armed forces sure do have one hand tied behind their backs in combat zones. In trying to protect the lives of civilians who may be living in war zones, our military commanders turn what could be simple, quick military engagements into more protracted and dangerous skirmishes. Overwhelming force gives way to containment and patrol exercises, and long-range attacks give way to urban, door-to-door brawls. I have a high-school aged son who is considering a future in the military, and I am going to recommend that he read this book. I think it will give him some good perspective on what military engagements and life tend to really be like - at least in wartime. If you have read this book and are thinking you'd like to read some similar books, here are a number of other books on similar topics that I have read and that you would probably enjoy: Jarhead: A Marine's Chronicle of the Gulf War and Other Battles

The story of any war goes through well-defined stages. In the beginning, we rely on reporters and newscasts to tell us their version of the war. Then, after it is over, we start seeing a series of books written by the participants who tell us what they experienced and saw. When enough time has passed, more complete and both official and non-official histories are published. Finally, as more and more time passes, the history of the war gets either deeper, or re-interpreted as more data comes to light, or societal mores change. This book is clearly amongst the first-person types and the author is one of the Marines who fought in a remote corner of Afghanistan. Bala Murghab is not a part of Afghanistan that more than a handful of people heard about, nor is it likely that it means anything to anyone other than those who ended up having to fight there. This book tells the story of a six month deployment of the Marine unit that the author was a part of. The deployment started in October of 2009 and lasted until April 2010. During this time, there were several units deployed in a Forward Operating Base named after Sergeant Todd (who was killed near that site). Members of the 82nd Airborne as well as an Italian unit accompanied the Marines, and several Afghan National Army units rotated in and out. The author was a Joint Traffic Air Controller which meant that he had the tools and skills to call in airstrikes in support of their missions on the ground. The story is mostly told from his vantage point with some notable departures where he starts telling stories that did not involve him or his unit directly.

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