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Red Platoon: A True Story Of American Valour



Synopsis

The only comprehensive, firsthand account of the 13-hour firefight at the Battle of Keating, by Medal of Honor recipient Clinton Romesha, for listeners of *Black Hawk Down* by Mark Bowden and *Lone Survivor* by Marcus Luttrell. "It doesn't get better.' To us that phrase nailed one of the essential truths, maybe even the essential truth, about being stuck at an outpost whose strategic and tactical vulnerabilities were so glaringly obvious to every soldier who had ever set foot in that place that the name itself - Keating - had become a kind of backhanded joke." In 2009 Clinton Romesha of Red Platoon and the rest of the Black Knight Troop were preparing to shut down Command Outpost Keating, the most remote and inaccessible in a string of bases built by the US military in Nuristan and Kunar in the hope of preventing Taliban insurgents from moving freely back and forth between Afghanistan and Pakistan. Three years after its construction, the army was finally ready to concede what the men on the ground had known immediately: it was simply too isolated and too dangerous to defend. On October 3, 2009, after years of constant smaller attacks, the Taliban finally decided to throw everything they had at Keating. The ensuing 13-hour battle - and eventual victory - cost eight men their lives. *Red Platoon* is the riveting firsthand account of the Battle of Keating, told by Romesha, who spearheaded both the defence of the outpost and the counterattack that drove the Taliban back beyond the wire and received the Medal of Honor for his actions.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Red Platoon, like all such books of the USA's recent conflicts, was a tough read. I expect the prior

generation had much the same feeling regarding books about the Vietnam War. Perhaps I simply know too many men and women who've fought in these conflicts. Either way, the book is fantastic. Red Platoon first introduces the NCOs and officers of the platoon. Most of them were veterans of either Iraq or Afghanistan already, though few had been assigned to the same unit prior to being sent to COP Keating. COP Keating is accurately described as a wretched folly, mainly because of its completely indefensible position. When the members of Red Platoon arrive, ostensibly to shut down the base, they immediately realize their predicament. Constant harassing by the Taliban confirmed the platoon's worst fears. They were literally vulnerable from every angle, and being at the bottom of the valley allowed the insurgents to target them with almost no risk of harm to themselves. Red Platoon, along with White and Blue Platoons, settled into a sort of rhythm. They came to regard the steady attacks as just part of the routine of COP Keating. However, when a determined, large Taliban force some 300-strong decided to assault the outpost directly, it came as a terrible surprise. The men of Keating were outnumbered nearly 5:1, and the enemy applied the lessons they'd learned from all their minor attacks to focus on the defensive positions. The sudden attack put even these professional soldiers on their heels. The immediate collapse of the allied Afghan forces aided the enemy greatly. Once the insurgents penetrated the base itself, the men of Keating had to fall back to the Alamo. This is not an easy read in terms of the subject matter. The almost clinical recounting pulls no punches.

Red Platoon is a detailed participant's account of a bloody battle that succeeds on three levels: as thoroughly researched and professionally written as *Black Hawk Down*, as compelling in its immediacy as *Dong Xoai*, and as good an account by a participant as *MIKE Force*. It is a straightforward account of a chaotic incident, its unembellished and unsentimental prose accentuates the confusion and horror of events. An earlier book describing the same battle, *The Outpost*, gives much more context, but conveys much less of the reality of the fight itself (in dueling subtitles, *The Outpost* described itself as "an untold story of American Valor," while *Red Platoon* claims to be "the true story of American Valor." Clinton Romesha speaks only good of the earlier book, he says its, "research was conducted with painstaking care," but I read that as faint praise and suspect his real attitude is demonstrated by his subtitle. In fact there is minimal overlap between the two books and both can be read for profit. While I find well-written and fact-based accounts of war to be compelling, it's hard to know what to think afterwards.

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