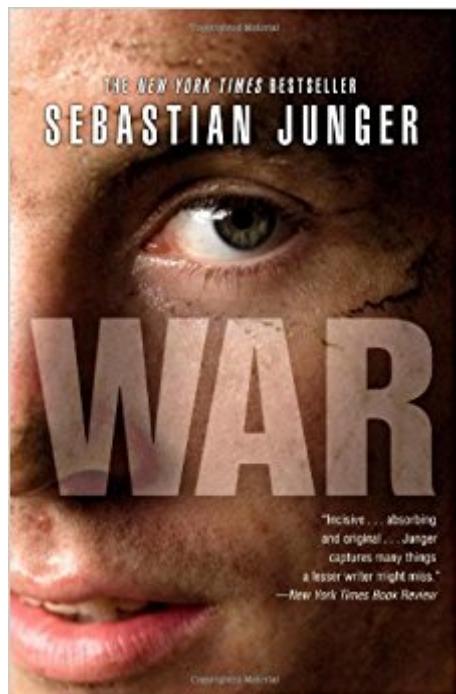


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WAR



Synopsis

In *WAR*, Sebastian Junger (*The Perfect Storm*) turns his brilliant and empathetic eye to the reality of combat--the fear, the honor, and the trust among men in an extreme situation whose survival depends on their absolute commitment to one another. His on-the-ground account follows a single platoon through a 15-month tour of duty in the most dangerous outpost in Afghanistan's Korengal Valley. Through the experiences of these young men at war, he shows what it means to fight, to serve, and to face down mortal danger on a daily basis.

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Customer Reviews

Evan Thomas and Sebastian Junger: Author One-on-One In this exclusive, we brought together authors Sebastian Junger and Evan Thomas and asked them to interview each other. Evan Thomas is one of the most respected historians and journalists writing today. He is the author of *The War Lovers*. Sebastian Junger is an internationally acclaimed author and a contributing editor to *Vanity Fair*, and has been awarded a National Magazine Award and an SAIS Novartis Prize for journalism. He is the author of *War*. Read on to see Sebastian Junger and Evan Thomas talk about their books. Evan Thomas: War really is hell in your book. And yet it seems to captivate some of the men who fight it. Why? Sebastian Junger: War is hell, as the saying goes--but it isn't only that. It's a lot of other things, too--most of them delivered in forms that are way more pure and intense than what is available back home. The undeniable hellishness of war forces men to bond in ways that aren't necessary--or even possible-- in civilian society. The closest thing to it might be the

parent-child bond, but that is not reciprocal. Children are generally not prepared to die for their parents, whereas the men in a platoon of combat infantry for the most part are prepared to do that for each other. For a lot of men, the security of being enclosed by a group like that apparently outweighs the terrors of being in combat. During World War II, wounded soldiers kept going AWOL from the rear-base hospitals in order to rejoin their units on the front line. Clearly, for those men, rejoining their comrades was more important than the risk of death. I'm curious about the reactions of foot soldiers in previous wars--the Civil War, the Spanish-American War. Are there letters from soldiers describing their anguish at being separated from their comrades? Or is this a modern phenomenon? Thomas: In the Spanish-American War, Teddy Roosevelt made a cult out of his band of brothers, the Rough Riders, with the twist that he was bringing together gentlemen and cowboys to be true Americans. It was a romantic ideal but largely realized in the short (several week) war they fought--two battles, about a 15 percent casualty rate. The anguish you speak of was felt by the Rough Riders who were left behind--there was no room on the transports for roughly a third of Roosevelt's troopers, and they had to stay behind in Florida. Roosevelt wrote of them weeping over being separated from their comrades and missing out on the fight. Roosevelt's war lust was sated by the Spanish-American War--for a time. He was not a notably bellicose president ("Talk softly but carry a big stick"). But when World War I came, he was almost pathologically driven to get back into the fight. He badgered President Wilson to let him raise a division. (Wilson, not wanting to create a martyr, said no.) Do you think the brotherhood of combat is in some ways addictive? What is it like for the soldiers and marines coming home? Junger: It's amazing to see these same themes played out war after war. Politicians seize war for themselves, in some ways, and the public certainly holds them accountable for it--but the men who actually do the fighting are extraordinarily conflicted about it all. Only one man in the platoon I was with chose to leave the army after the deployment--Brendan O'Byrne, a main character in my book and now someone I consider a good friend. A few weeks ago we were hanging out with a family I know, and the talk turned to how rough the fighting was in Afghanistan. The mother, a woman in her thirties, asked Brendan if there was anything he missed about the experience. Brendan looked at her and said, without any irony, "Yes, almost all of it." I think what Brendan meant was that he missed an existence where every detail mattered--whether you tied your shoelaces, whether you cleaned your rifle--and you never had to question the allegiance of your friends. As Brendan said at another point, "There are guys in the platoon who straight-up hate each other-- but they'd all die for each other." Once they've been exposed to that, it's very hard for these guys to go back to a seemingly meaningless and ill-defined civilian life. What happened to the men after they returned from their adventures with

Roosevelt? Where did their lives lead them? Thomas: The Rough Riders seem to have had endless reunions--but nothing like the PTSD so widely reported today. But perhaps that was because they were only fighting for about a month--a "splendid little war," as diplomat John Hay called it, apparently without irony. In *The War Lovers*, I was looking at another kind of camaraderie--the bond of men who want to get the country into war, who think that war will somehow restore the nation to spiritual greatness. Roosevelt and his best friend, Senator Henry Cabot Lodge, believed that America at the end of the 19th century had become "overcivilized"--that young men were turning soft and needed to somehow stir "the wolf rising in the heart," as Roosevelt put it. "All the great races have been fighting races," he said. It is significant that Roosevelt and Lodge, who pushed America to go to war with Spain in 1898, had written about war a great deal but never seen it. President William McKinley resisted; he had, as he noted, seen "the dead piled up at Antietam" in the Civil War. But the hawks in America were able to roll the doves, not for the last time. Before *The War Lovers* I wrote *Sea of Thunder*, a book about the last naval battle of World War II, Leyte Gulf. I interviewed a number of survivors from the USS Johnston, a destroyer sunk in the battle after an unbelievably brave fight against superior forces. About 220 men went in the water but only about half of them were rescued. Because of a series of mistakes by the navy, they were left in the water for two and half days. The sharks came on the first night. For a long time, the survivors did not talk much about it. But then, after Tom Brokaw wrote *The Greatest Generation*, they began having reunions and speaking--almost compulsively--about their experiences. The recollections are often harrowing. Yet even years later, when the veterans compiled their recollections in a book of about eighty oral histories, the veterans did not speak of their own fear, with only one exception, as I recall. Somehow acknowledging fear remained a taboo.

Starred Review. War is insanely exciting.... Don't underestimate the power of that revelation, warns bestselling author and *Vanity Fair* contributing editor Junger (*The Perfect Storm*). The war in Afghanistan contains brutal trauma but also transcendent purpose in this riveting combat narrative. Junger spent 14 months in 2007–2008 intermittently embedded with a platoon of the 173rd Airborne brigade in Afghanistan's Korengal Valley, one of the bloodiest corners of the conflict. The soldiers are a scruffy, warped lot, with unkempt uniforms—they sometimes do battle in shorts and flip-flops—and a ritual of administering friendly beatings to new arrivals, but Junger finds them to be superlative soldiers. Junger experiences everything they do—nerve-racking patrols, terrifying roadside bombings and ambushes, stultifying weeks in camp when they long for a firefight to relieve the tedium. Despite the stress and the grief when buddies die, the author finds

war to be something of an exalted state: soldiers experience an almost sexual thrill in the excitement of a firefight. Junger struggles to understand and a profound sense of commitment to subordinating their self-interests to the good of the unit. Junger mixes visceral combat scenes, raptly aware of his own fear and exhaustion, with quieter reportage and insightful discussions of the physiology, social psychology, and even genetics of soldiering. The result is an unforgettable portrait of men under fire. (May 11) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

I'm a retired Army officer and Viet Nam vet. The book was engaging from its beginning citing (then) LTC Cavoli's (whom I know personally) leadership and experiences thru to events in 2012. I learned a great deal. However, I found the (to me) over emphasis on the tactical detracted from an overall story of a lack a national strategic purpose, rationale and approach (then and still). Half of the tactical accounts would have been equally convincing and credible. That there were nearly as many strategic approaches as there were major commanders and Sec Defs was also a compelling argument. It was interesting and true that all too often presidential and secretarial pronouncements and orders were impossible to implement at the brigade level and below. I liked the idea of a viable career path for military advisors. Finally, I also believe that at any level leaving the nation building to the State Department is an absolute non-starter, a guaranteed local and national failure waiting to happen. There is not a word in the book to convince me otherwise.

Richard Clarke's experience in cybersecurity is virtually unmatched in the recent era. He has no end of experience (and stories) to tell in both commercial and government arenas protecting networks and high visibility systems from attack. Whether you are in the IT industry, or just someone who wants to know about the threats our country faces, Cyber War is a brilliant introduction to the surface layer of what that conflict looks like in the last couple years. As the threat landscape continues to get broader with the introduction of cyber capabilities by more countries - some better controlled and more tightly defined than others - it pays dividends to understand the threat and think about how your life can be impacted. This book offers a series of stories, of descriptions, and a discussion of the evolution of the cyber attack as a tool in the arsenal of criminal enterprise, and - lately - nation states. It is, for the most part, well written and requires basic knowledge of what computers are and how they work to get the most out of the text, but stays at a high enough level that you really do not have to be a "techie" to "get it". One side note, those who are immersed in this

world daily will find snatches of Richard Clarke's experience interesting, but overall will find little new in the text if you are indeed in this arena day to day. (It is, after all, an unclassified published discussion "looking back" as it were.) Still worth the buy in my opinion, if only as something to read through and then keep on the virtual shelf for when something is rattling around in your brain and you want to look back through.

Great book. An interesting look at the combat experience and indirectly, a look at US policy in Afghanistan. (No criticism inferred or implied.) With Junger's book, TRIBES, it does much to explain PTSD and the continuing problems we see around us today, in the "civilized" world. The documentary RESTREPO is the foundation for this book.

Recently I published an article, "Seven Books Every Presidential Candidate Should Read." After reading this frightening book about the vulnerability of our military and economy, from the power grid to the financial structure, to cyber war, I will update the article. Clarke is a recognized expert, and is not a partisan hack. He has served as an adviser to Reagan, the Bushes, Clinton and Obama on these topics. Though this was published in 2010, I've seen nothing to suggest we are less vulnerable today, and some articles suggesting we are more so. Worth reading, and not just by computer geeks. Robert A. Hall Author: The Coming Collapse of the American Republic

Those interested in cyber security, international diplomacy or government review This is one of those books you should read for its message, especially if you think that we're safe from cyber attack. Unfortunately the truth is far different, and it will likely stay that way indefinitely. Stated simply, if you're not afraid yet, you should be, and reading Richard Clarke's Cyber War should do just fine to repopulate your anxiety closet if it's been emptying out lately. Clarke is in a position to know what the real story is due to his recent government experience in the upper echelons of cyber defense. He presents his case for stronger defenses clearly, and without too much jargon. He also outlines not only current weaknesses of concern, but also the administrative and bureaucratic flaws that can lead as surely to vulnerabilities as technical gaps. A highlight for those interested in the nuts and bolts of cyber warfare are his readable details on how actual attacks (such as the US/Israeli - Stuxnet attack launched against Iran) were conducted, and how U.S. enemies could exploit similar weaknesses in our own defenses. Any book in an area as fast-moving as cyber security is itself vulnerable to becoming out of date quickly, but this one should hold up well for a number of years more, due to the fact that it focuses on fundamental weaknesses rather than the details of how

individual exploits have been conducted

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