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In Iraq, the front line is everywhere... and everywhere in Iraq, women in the US military fight. More than 155,000 of them have served in Iraq since 2003-4 times the number of women sent to Desert Storm in 1991 - and more than 430 have been wounded and over 70 killed, almost twice the number of US military women killed in action in Korea, Vietnam, and Desert Storm combined. But should women be in combat? Do they have what it takes to be warriors? Compelling questions once... but empty questions now, because more than ever, American women are in combat, and they are warriors. The real question is: What is their experience of war? We haven't heard their stories - until now.

Band of Sisters: American Women at War in Iraq Details

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Jessalyn Gray says

This is an incredible book! I loved reading every minute of it. I enjoyed reading about stories of women who served for many reasons. One is because I haven't seen a lot of books just on women who have served in the military branches. It was refreshing.

C.J. Shane says

This is an important book for anyone interested in the Iraq War and in the role of women who are/were soldiers in that war. The author, Kirsten Holmstedt, conducted extensive interviews and simply let the soldiers speak for themselves. However, I can say, as a former newspaper reporter, that sometimes letting the interviewee talk just isn't enough. Holmstedt missed many opportunities to follow up with further questions and find out more. I suspect the author empathized so much with the soldiers that she didn't want to push them any further to talk about distressing things like killing someone, leaving children behind, failed romances, etc. I understand the soldiers' unwillingness to go deep because they might fear being seen as weak or being an unworthy soldier. The male soldiers are having the same problem. I can't help but think that the high level of PTSD among returning Iraq War and Afghanistan War vets can partly be explained by the pressure from the military to suck it up and not talk about those painful experiences. This would have been five stars had Holmstedt gone deeper.

Aisha says

The stories were interesting and I liked getting another perspective into what someone else went through in Iraq. The writing was a bit mediocre at times but I powered through. I would recommend.

Betsey says

I purchased this book first and foremost because I am a female Marine that served in Kuwait and was there for the start of the war on Iraq, March 20, 2003 and I wanted to hear other women's stories. Secondly my Officer-In-Charge (OIC) has her story in this book. It is a wonderful collection of stories. It is a great way for ordinary people to understand the reason women join the military, what they do while they are in and how they deal with the conflict we are put into.

Karen says

Reading about the women that are serving in combat positions in the middle east, learning how important their roles are, and seeing how hard they have to work to be accepted as soldiers and not women was an eye

opener to me. I have a great deal of respect for ALL that serve and at first was unfavorable of women serving in front line positions. This book has helped me see what sacrifice, dedication and courage women in the armed services really have.

Ford says

The book is a series of short stories that are interesting. But I am not real fond of short stories books so that is the reason for 3 stars instead of 4 stars.

Mak says

Excellent book with some moving and inspirational war stories from the women who were in the heat of it!

Dan says

The forward is the only useful part of this book.

Erik Sapp says

I like how the author profiled women of various ranks, profession, and service. It gives a wide base from which to view the experience of women serving in Iraq. None of the stories are really in-depth, but that isn't the point. We aren't supposed to focus on one, or a small group. Each of these women has a story to tell.

I also enjoyed being able to read this book well after the fact to know what happened to some. Tammy Duckworth (who is not profiled, but who wrote the introduction) is listed as the head of the Illinois VA - which she was at the time. Of course now, she is Sen. Tammy Duckworth (D-IL). Amy McGrath is shown as a Marine Captain early in her career as a WSO in a F/A-18. Although the book does say she later had eye surgery and became a F/A-18 pilot, the author could not know she would retire as a LTCOL and recently (as I write this) lost election to the US House from Kentucky.

Tiffany says

Much more a work of passion than skill. The title is somewhat misleading, as there is no "band of sisters" that the tales follow. They are disconnected samples from women serving in assorted branches of the military.

Speedtribes says

I read about 2/3 of this book and skimmed the rest. I was initially hoping for a more female version of

Generation Kill, but ended up going cross-eyed at something that came across like a clueless civilian trying very hard to get things right, and hitting all the wrong notes. Because of the writing style, the technical explanations felt dumbed-down. The writer had done just enough research to make it seem vaguely as if she knew what she was talking about, but then she'd go and talk about different branches of the military while using the wrong names for their equipment. She'd use military slang on one page, such as the term 'lit up' and explain what it means in terms of slang. And then a few pages down, use the term again, but in an entirely non-military way which just confused matters. I'm certain the women's experiences were real, but the writing style presented their stories so badly I had a hard time parsing or believing much of anything - It was like having someone's aunt tell the tale of someone's nephew's cousin, through the grapevine; half blown up and half missing vital information to make it a coherent and believable story.

Far too much passive voice. I also disapprove of the attempt to capitalize on the name 'Band of Brothers'. If the women were all in a platoon, or even were all part of the same rotating organization like the Rochambelles - perhaps the title would have fit, but I don't believe the fact they happened to be women scattered across all different parts of entirely different sections of the military would be enough to make them sisters.

I felt like I was reading someone's highschool term paper, or one of my mom's emails. I'm surprised the book got published at all. (Or at least had an editor hack away at it some more.) The soldiers should have written the stories themselves, and come across a lot better as a result. The forward by Maj. Duckworth was the best written part of the book.

Melissa says

I am an Army Veteran. I served in the 80s during the Cold War as a Russian Linguist. Female veterans of that time and those that served before us received almost no recognition. I have been happy that this has changed over the last decade or so and very much wanted to read and share their stories. Imagine my heartbreak when On the second page of Tammie Duckworth's Forward, she spends half the page insulting the generation of women who served before her.

She says that some of the women that served before her served honorably but she doesn't spend any time on elaborating but goes into how many made her life as a soldier more difficult. Really? What does she imagine it was like for us during the decade after the Army was first integrated? She says she was often the only woman in her unit. What then does she imagine it was like for the women that served before her? Maj. Duckworth is a woman I admire. I have appreciated her foray into the political arena and wished her well. To have her throw an entire generation of women who paved the way for her under the bus is beyond heartbreaking and disgusting to me. And worst of all, it was so unnecessary. Her story is remarkable without insulting anyone else, particularly the women who paved the way for her.

Kat says

This was a very interesting read and a pretty comprehensive look at war from the perspective of a female American soldier. The women whose stories are contained here come from all different branches and subsets of the military from gunners to pilots to medics, from all different walks of life, and all with varying reasons

for joining the armed forces. The thing that is consistent throughout is the sense of purpose and determination of these women to do the best they can at their jobs. (I think my favorite story from the book is of Air Force Lieutenant Colonel Polly Montgomery, pilot of the C-130 Hercules "Herk" transport aircraft. She really encapsulates a good soldier and commander.) While the differences between male and female soldiers do exist and are acknowledged, when the boots hit the ground gender ceases to matter. All that matters is the mission. Sometimes the timeline of events in the stories can get a little weird, but can still be followed, so I recommend anyone interested in the military or female fighters to give it a look.

Nay says

I have mixed feelings on this book. First off the title really bothers me, it's trying to play off Band of Brothers. I don't feel this is a title that is just interchangeable. The men who served and were the original Band of Brothers earned that title through blood, sweat and tears. There is a legacy with that particular unit that goes with it that continues today. The author should have thought a bit harder. I don't really feel that aside from being women who served in Iraq that enough ties them together to be branded "Band of Sisters". I am also bothered by some of the stories, while some really caught my attention others bothered me with "facts", I suppose they are facts, from my understanding the author sat with all the women and heard their stories, then turned around and published them in this book. Some of the stories I feel were a bit farfetched and also showed lack of professionalism and sadly some of the heroic acts cost some injuries and even their life. I hope it was bad writing versus actuality of facts and exploitation of lack of common sense. Perhaps I'm a bit harsh in my review as I've been a Soldier who has been deployed.

Another fact that many might not ever catch but something that greatly bothered me. If you are going to write a book involving different branches of the military, learn that terms are not all interchangeable. The Army does not wear cammies. The lack of effort in making sure correct terminology was being used really makes me wonder who pre-read her book to make sure things were right. I'm big on the "getting it right" concept when it comes to our Armed Forces. While I admire that she felt compelled to contribute in some way after 9/11, it's important to get the facts right along with that contribution.

I wouldn't recommend this book to many without a disclaimer that if simple things like correct terminology isn't being used, how much of the stories are true? Just my thoughts.

Ellen says

Holmstedt features the stories of 12 different women who were deployed to Iraq during the early years of the war. They are pilots, nurses, truck and humvee drivers, public relations journalists, mechanics, filling every job available to them. Although they are not allowed in combat many of these women found themselves fighting alongside their fellow soldiers in many extremely dangerous and life-threatening situations. Some were gravely injured and others lovingly cared for those who were in need of help. All bravely followed orders and paved the way for female soldiers who would follow in their footsteps. Being the mother of a young woman in the Air Force I found this book very difficult to read at times. It was hard not to see my own daughter in such frightening circumstances and some of these women's stories brought me to tears. Please let there come a day when none of our sons and daughters have to face deploying to a war zone.
