



Soldier Five: The Real Truth About The Bravo Two Zero Mission

Mike Coburn

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SOLDIER FIVE is an elite soldier's explosive memoir of his time within the Special Air Service (SAS) and, in particular, his experiences during the 1991 Gulf War. As a member of the Special Forces patrol now famously known by its call sign Bravo Two Zero, he and seven others were inserted hundreds of kilometres behind enemy lines. Their mission to reconnoitre targets, undertake surveillance of Scud missil sites and sabotage Iraqi communications links was to end in desperate failure. From the outset, the patrol was dogged by problems that contributed both directly and indirectly to the demise of the mission. The patrol's compromise, and subsequent attempts to evade Iraqi troops, resulted in four members of Bravo Two Zero being captured and a further three killed. One escaped. But the story goes further that the Gulf War itself. Despite numerous books, films and articles on the same subject, the British Government has done its utmost to thwart the release of SOLDIER FIVE, at one stage claiming the book in its entirety was confidential. A campaign of harassment that took some four and a half years of litigation to resolve has now resulted in this controversial publication. SOLDIER FIVE is a gripping and suspenseful account of one man's experiences as a Special Forces soldier. Revealing his conflicts and loyalties, and the relationships he forged both on and off the battlefield, this book is the resolution of a soldier's determined fight to see his story told.

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Trevor says

The real story of the ill fated Bravo Two Zero mission, without all the sensationalism (IE lies) of Andy McNab (Bravo Two Zero) or Chris Ryan (The one that got away).

A superb read, well worth it!

Michael says

The author, Mike Coburn, a New Zealand SAS (Special Air Services) soldier is drafted into the UK SAS and from there becomes involved with those troops in the 1991 Gulf War. The author recounts his army life and the events which occurred whilst in Iraq which are focussed around his squad being dropped behind the lines of the Iraq Army and basically being abandoned by the "top brass" who decided that they did not have enough aircraft to attempt a rescue.

The story at that stage is well written and makes for some tense escapades as they try to avoid the Iraqis. It is only in the latter section of the book that the whole story falls flat in my opinion. This centres around the legal challenges he made about the senior officers incompetence and their decision-making processes. The book supposedly markets itself about these legal challenges and yet I found myself really wondering if so much needed to be devoted to that aspect.

Had he instead written more about other SAS operations that he was involved with it could well have been a very good book.

Thomas Garvey says

The only book you should read about Bravo Two Zero.

David Crespin says

Overall an excellent and honest account of death-defying action behind enemy lines. I found the narrative tailed off somewhat towards the end and the descriptions of the legal wrangles did not really hold my attention. A book I would thoroughly recommend.

Nzfiend says

I gave this FIVE stars, but would have given it NINE OUT OF TEN. And not just because the author is a New Zealander. No sir.

I give this book a high rating, not for its literary brilliance, but for the fact that it is real. Unlike the other two books written by "soldiers" who then became "best selling" "authors" (Andy McNab and Chris Ryan) this one tells it how it was.

Very refreshing. Thanks Mike.

Khezu Khez says

Andy McNab is the most entertaining but the most histrionic.

Chris Ryan is the most critical but also the most unreliable.

Mike Coburn is the most sincere but also the most plain.

I am fascinated by the entire event of Bravo Two Zero, from the event, to the way the involved dealt with it afterwards and the way the former team is now split into the dead, the McNab, the Ryan, and the Everyone Else.

There were a few things that could be matched between books, yet the differences were glaring. Some could be explained by people misremember or even misinterpret things as chaos hit, but there really isn't any excuses on how between three people they could not agree on what was the goal of their BTZ mission.

I don't think I'll ever know, and I'm fine with that. In the mean time, I can only trust my (albeit incredibly lay-person) judgement and with that, I'm inclined to believe Coburn over the others.

Even if the honesty meant that this book is by far the dullest of all of them. After all, dramatic flares are what makes a page turner.

Keith McArdle says

So much bullsh*t has been written about this patrol that it was refreshing to read what felt like a grounded, realistic account of what actually happened on the ground in Iraq. Definitely worth a read.
