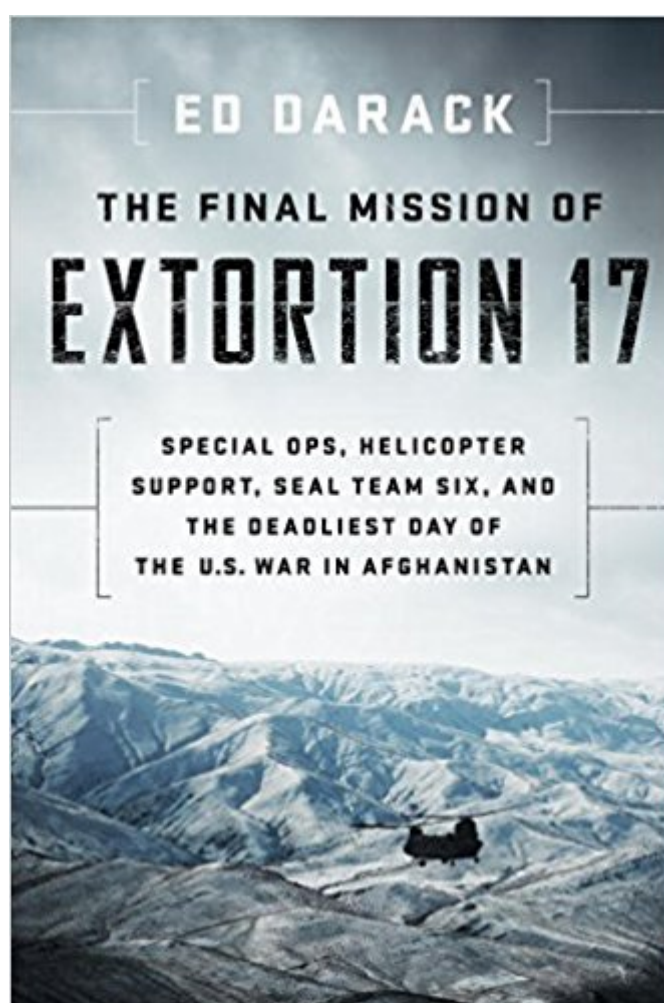


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The Final Mission Of Extortion 17: Special Ops, Helicopter Support, SEAL Team Six, And The Deadliest Day Of The U.S. War In Afghanistan



Synopsis

On August 6, 2011, a U.S. Army CH-47D Chinook helicopter approached a landing zone in Afghanistan 40 miles southwest of Kabul. The helicopter, call sign Extortion 17, was on a mission to reinforce American and coalition special operations troops. It would never return. Insurgents fired at the Chinook, severed one of its rear rotor blades, and brought it crashing to the ground. All 38 onboard perished instantly in the single greatest moment of sacrifice for Americans in the war in Afghanistan. Those killed were some of the U.S.'s most highly trained and battle-honed commandos, including 15 men from the Gold Squadron of the Naval Special Warfare Development Group, known popularly as SEAL Team 6, which had raided a Pakistan compound and killed Osama bin Laden just three months earlier. The downing of Extortion 17 spurred a number of conspiracy theories, such as the idea that the shutdown was revenge for bin Laden's death. In *The Final Mission of Extortion 17*, Ed Darack debunks this theory and others and uncovers the truth behind this mysterious tragedy. His account of the brave pilots, crew, and passengers of Extortion 17 and the events of that fateful day is interwoven into a rich, complex narrative that also discusses modern joint combat operations, the history of the Afghan war to that date, U.S. helicopter use in Afghanistan, and the new and evolving military technologies and tactics being developed to mitigate such tragedies now and in the future.

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Customer Reviews

“Meticulously reported and deftly told, this is the definitive account of the 38 people killed aboard Extortion 17—the largest loss of life in a single incident during the Afghan war. Ed

Darack not only debunks the conspiracy theories once and for all; he also honors the pilots, crew, and special operators who perished on that fateful day. This is an important book for anyone who wants to understand the war in Afghanistan and the Americans who have risked their lives fighting it.

• R. M. Schneiderman, Deputy Editor, Newsweek

“Far more gripping than any thriller, this well-researched and cleanly written account of an American battlefield tragedy is one of the finest books to emerge from our recent wars. Crafted with knowledge of twenty-first-century combat and deep respect for our troops, this book is nonetheless unsparing in its portrait of war’s reality and the toll it takes on flesh-and-blood men in uniform.”

• Ralph Peters, Fox News strategic analyst and author of *Lines of Fire*

“Darack expertly re-creates the tragedy of Extortion 17. Skillfully reported, the book is a must-read for anyone looking to understand what happened the night Extortion 17 was shot down in Afghanistan.”

• Kevin Maurer, coauthor of *No Easy Day*

PUBLISHERS WEEKLY

Darack (Victory Point), a military writer and photographer who has embedded with units in Iraq and Afghanistan, shares a well-researched story of the downing of a U.S. Army CH-47D Chinook helicopter, call sign Extortion 17, carrying members of SEAL Team Six in Afghanistan on Aug. 6, 2011. Where previous works on this subject have largely highlighted the operators of SEAL Team Six, Darack focuses his take on the incident—it is the largest single American loss of life in the Afghanistan War, with all 38 on board killed—on the five crew members of the helicopter. As a result, this work is valuable and informative as it describes the critical role Army Aviation played in Iraq and Afghanistan and makes clear the difficulties of flying in the high altitudes of Afghanistan’s mountain ranges. Threats faced by Army Aviation in Iraq and Afghanistan include enemy action (44 helicopters have been shot down in Iraq and Afghanistan with the loss of more than 120 lives), mechanical failure, and shifting weather conditions. Short, clear, and tersely written, Darack’s book is suited to readers interested in military affairs and is a fitting tribute to the Army aviators represented by the crew of Extortion 17. Maps & illus.

BOOKLIST

Darack tells the life stories of the 39 men flying under the call sign, Extortion 17, who were killed on August 6, 2011, when their Chinook helicopter was shot down over Afghanistan. Military argot permeates Darack’s account, giving his readers a sense of the high degree of training necessary for personnel to conduct the kind of operation on which Extortion 17 was embarked. It was to be a night-time landing of a special operations force to capture or kill a Taliban leader. Explaining the intricate aerial ballet that supports such an action (which includes gunships, surveillance planes, and bomb-laden fighter jets), Darack underscores the high-tech American way of making war versus the low-tech yet effective efforts of the Taliban: it was a rocket-propelled grenade that downed

Extortion 17. Dramatizing the incident, based on real-time recordings from the orbiting support planes, Darack delivers a respectful salute to the dead amid detailed exemplification of the bravery of those fighting America's protracted war in Afghanistan. LIBRARY JOURNAL Writer and photographer Darack (Victory Point) investigates the destruction of a Chinook helicopter carrying a number of high-profile special operatives, including numerous men from SEAL Team 6, whom are best known for the mission that killed Osama Bin Laden. Darack recounts the circumstances surrounding this August 2011 event, attempting to debunk a theory that claims the aircraft was destroyed in an act of revenge for Bin Laden's death. Most are aware of the effort to eliminate Bin Laden, but fewer may recall this tragedy with as much clarity, having received far less media exposure. The author provides a thorough treatment of the disaster, with several chapters dedicated to the personnel and the specifications of the aircraft, which may not be captivating to the layperson but would be of interest to military historians. Darack also does an admirable job of demonstrating through science, history, and statistics (owing to the inherent inaccuracy of a rocket-propelled grenade [RPG], it would be a poor choice for such an important "revenge mission") that vengeance conspiracies could be safely ruled out. Verdict: This is less of a narrative and more of a march through the events and circumstances, making it ideal for modern history buffs and military historians and perhaps less so for casual readers. —Benjamin Brudner, Curry Coll. Lib., Milton, MA

ED DARACK is a writer and photographer who has traveled to Iraq and Afghanistan numerous times to embed with infantry and aviation units at the front lines of modern war. He is the author of four books, including Victory Point, and numerous articles on military topics ranging from counterinsurgency to close air support. His work has been published in Air & Space magazine, the Marine Corps Gazette, Leatherneck Magazine, Foreign Policy, Proceedings of the United States Naval Institute, and others.

An Exquisitely Researched and Illustrated History of The Single Greatest Incident of Sacrifice in the Afghanistan War.. Ed Darack a magazine War Correspondent and Photographer tells the details and backstory of the 2011 downing of a US Army CH-47D Chinook Helicopter. He gives details of the technologies and men which participated in this tragic mission; as well as the individual stories and families of the individuals who participated. He also tells of the 15 Seal Team Six member; men who in many cases had participated in the hunt and elimination of Osama Bin Laden. He dispels the rumor that this shoot-down was revenge for Osama's demise as well as other untruths.

This heroic story grips the reader and provides the background to understand this tragedy in the context of the Americans who sacrificed, their ambitions training and families. An important and excellent read.

The Final Mission of Extortion 17 was cut short in an assault that takes little time to describe. The brave young heroes whose lives were lost -- that's a story that takes longer, and that's the real topic of this book. Written by an author skilled at describing aviation-related topics, we have a personal interest story of our seemingly never-ending war against terrorism and of some of the men who were inspired by family history and by the events of September 2001. The book held my interest throughout as it traveled among the crew and members of Extortion 17, brings us to the day of the final mission, and ultimately describes what took place thereafter. As sad as the well researched novel is, I found the text compelling and educational, giving me a feel for what the men of the unit had gone through to get where they all wanted very much to be. But I did find myself thinking of those men repeatedly in the days after my reading. I'm sure you will do the same.

The story was well paced and was easy to read, telling the backgrounds, incidents and events that led up to the shoot down. It was very concise and to the point in discussing the shooting down of Extortion 17. The narrative and recollection of those involved or who knew the men of Extortion 17 was informative and heartbreaking. Stories like this are ones that should be taught in schools and history classes. It is only the men and women that protect us that allows all of us the freedom to think and say what we want without the fear of being silenced. I highly recommend this book for all those that want to find out about the real people that are protecting us, their family and friends and the costs to do so.

History must be told for us to learn. It must be written while those still alive can retell the story. Almost six years have gone by since Extortion 17 was shot down. The story is told in a respectful, truthful manner. I thank Mr. Darack for his passion to tell a story correctly. Well done, sir. My interest in Special Ops goes all the way back to the beginning of my active duty AF service in '78. Assigned to C-130s, I loved every aspect of my job, like Ed Darack shows that the men of Extortion 17 loved their jobs too. The May '80, Desert One, accident that happened trying to rescue the US hostages held in Iran was the start of the build up of all aspects of Special Ops. Initially a small subset of the military, Special Ops in the early '80s started growing in size and importance. I did my part as a member of a SOLL (Special Operation Low Level) flight crew member. My four years was all about

training and growing in knowledge, and since the '80s were a time of peace, I did not deploy into any combat then. I needed to wait until Desert Shield/Desert Storm to play my part in a war. What Mr. Darack explains in vivid details are the growth patterns from those early days of Special Ops, where we were learning basically how to walk and chew gum. My gosh, reading about the coordination that evolves around Special Ops now compared to my training in the '80s is like talking about going to Kindergarten versus working on your Masters. Night and Day difference. So if you are an old Special Ops guy from the early days, you will feel pride in what all of our hard work and training helped to grow and build. If you just want to read about some great America guys working and giving everything they had for the service of others, then this is a story for you. I once had a commander state, "There is no 'I' in TEAM". That is the story that is told here in these pages. The story of teamwork. The story of living life for a purpose. The story of family and brotherhood. For me it was a must read.

This is such a page turner that I couldn't put it down! It is very well researched and well written. I won't go into details of the story as other reviewers have provided a lot of information. But if you love true stories and you are motivated by heroes, this is definitely one that you don't want to miss.

Great Book...very insightful and interesting....highly recommended book....get yours on today.....

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