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SAS Secret War



Synopsis

From 1971-76 the SAS fought and won a guerilla war in the hills and deserts of southern Oman. They were successful, defeating the communist rebels and keeping the operation so secret that the Labour party were unaware of what was happening until they won the 1974 election. This book was first written in 1980 and heavily edited by the Ministry of Defence and the Foreign Office. These restrictions have now been lifted, allowing the book to reveal key details previously omitted. Used as a text book by student soldiers, it reveals how small teams of elite soldiers destroyed a guerilla army. While the US Army was losing its public war in Vietnam, the SAS fought in secrecy, saving the Omani regime and preventing Soviet-backed guerillas seizing control of the Persian Gulf.

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Customer Reviews

I'm interested in Oman since it serves as one of the venues in one of the novels I've published. More important, the world went merrily by as the little war took place with British forces honoring their commitments in the country. The book was particularly interesting in the description of developing counter-revolutionary irregular militias, and the Special Air Services appears to have in-depth experience with that strategy and tactic. There is a massive number of groups interacting in the book, and the author does a credible job of keeping the reader straight with BATTs, CADs, firgats, and SOAFs. Because the author utilizes a number of military slang terms closely related to British usage, he does provide a glossary. However, keeping in mind that the format is now e-book, it would have been helpful to have the glossary at the beginning of the book, to get those terms in the reader's mind before initiating the story. The other troubling aspect is the description of the real

estate involved. Though the author made a valiant effort with narrative description, an occasional map would have helped the reader along. Highly recommended to those who have missed a war or two and who want to know more about the activities of the notable Special Air Services.

Good Book

This book is pretty interesting and adventurous.

SAS Secret War: Operation Storm in the Middle East by Major Tony Jeapes is the history of Dhofar Rebellion in Oman. Jeapes was the first SAS officer to reach the rank of General. He commanded the British forces in Northern Ireland during the 1980s and retired as commander UK land forces. This book was originally published in 1980 as SAS Operation Oman after editing by the Ministry of Defence and the Foreign Office. This edition was released in 2000 without the censorship. The author does leave some names out of the book but includes the previously censored material. Also included is a background on the Special Air Service (SAS). The SAS is part of Britain's Special Forces. In the Cold War battles against a popular communist uprising, most were unsuccessful with Cuba and Vietnam perhaps the most well known. The Dhofar Rebellion against the Sultanate of Muscat and Oman is little known. However, this is one of the most successful battles against communist rebellion. The operation is still used as a textbook example of counterinsurgency in Britain. Jeapes gives a detailed history with a calm personal account. It is very British in that Jeapes records facts and leaves emotions out of the story. There is some humor in dealing with the local soldiers and their attitudes. The locals wanted their AK-47s and not the British weapons. The AK47s were a symbol of a warrior taken from the enemy. Even after demonstrating the effectiveness of the British weapons, it was still a hard sell. The success of the mission lay in the ability to build trust and win the hearts and minds of the people. One of the more important non-military aspects of the SAS involvement was veterinarian support to help the locals keep their livestock alive and well. This was very well received. Medical support and amnesty for surrendering rebel troops bolstered support. The Omani troops were treated well and made to feel part of the process and not token national support. Not everything went smoothly in the planning and building stages, but issues were worked out. The effort was not a one-sided British affair but a joint affair. The SAS Secret War is a well-written account of a successful and mostly forgotten counterinsurgency mission. It offers insight in cultural as well as military tactics in the formation of a successful undertaking.

When I left 22 SAS in 1971, it was to commence my very first tour of duty in N. Ireland. At that time, elements of that particular regiment were fighting a little-known, and barely covered in the UK press!, war in Muscat and Oman. As I stood at the barracks gates in Hereford waiting for my taxi, a dear friend who was one of a small number of Fijian members of the regiment turned up in an open desert Landrover and drove me to the station. It was his way of saying farewell. He was a giant of a man in more ways than one and, as he dropped me off en route to my first operational tour of duty, I was already aware that he would soon be back in Oman undertaking what was for him, just another! That man was Corporal Labalaba and the following year he died in heroic circumstances along with a colleague at Mirbat. Author Tony Jeapes joined the SAS in Malaya in 1958 and won an MC in Oman in 1959. He later commanded 22 SAS Regiment for which he earned the OBE. Next he commanded the British Airborne Brigade and later still was appointed Commander Land Forces in Northern Ireland in the rank of Major General. It was at that time that I actually met him and was able to introduce him to some of his old diving buddies from around the Province. By now it was 1990 and I was completing my 7th year of duty there. Oh, how little had changed in those long years! This work is a history of a campaign that, even now, is never mentioned on Remembrance Sunday when most vicars, priests and padres try to recall as many campaigns as possible - having already mentioned the two obligatory world wars. Muscat and Oman was a campaign which was ignored throughout its duration and forgotten just as soon as it was completed in spite of those lives lost. This is the first-hand account that needed to be written and I am so very pleased that, not only was it written, but it had been produced by one who understood the conflict as well as any man and that makes it a 'must' for amateur and professional historians alike. NM

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