



A Handful of Hard Men: The SAS and the Battle for Rhodesia

Hannes Wessels

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During the West's great transition into the post-Colonial age, the country of Rhodesia refused to succumb quietly, and throughout the 1970s fought back almost alone against Communist-supported elements that it did not believe would deliver proper governance. During this long war many heroes emerged, but none more skillful and courageous than Captain Darrell Watt of the Rhodesian SAS, who placed himself at the tip of the spear in the deadly battle to resist the forces of Robert Mugabe and Joshua Nkomo. It is difficult to find another soldier's story to equal Watt's in terms of time spent on the field of battle and challenges faced. Even by the lofty standards of the SAS and Special Forces, one has to look far to find anyone who can match his record of resilience and valor in the face of such daunting odds and with resources so paltry. In the fight he showed himself to be a military maestro. A bush-lore genius, blessed with uncanny instincts and an unbridled determination to close with the enemy, he had no peers as a combat-tracker (and there was plenty of competition). But the Rhodesian theater was a fluid and volatile one in which he performed in almost every imaginable fighting role; as an airborne shock-trooper leading camp attacks, long range reconnaissance operator, covert urban operator, sniper, saboteur, seek-and-strike expert, and in the final stages as a key figure in mobilizing an allied army in neighboring Mozambique. After 12 years in the cauldron of war his cause slipped from beneath him, however, and Rhodesia gave way to Zimbabwe. When the guns went quiet Watt had won all his battles but lost the war. In this fascinating work we learn that in his twilight years he is now concerned with saving wildlife on a continent where they are in continued danger, devoting himself to both the fauna and African people he has cared so deeply about. "

A Handful of Hard Men: The SAS and the Battle for Rhodesia Details

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michael evans says

Incredible guys, incredible courage

Thanks for sharing the amazing lives and stories of Daryl, Andre and other brilliant SAS Rodies. Loved every page, pity those boys sacrificed so very much for such a BS outcome!

Anton Van Reenen says

The Best book ever !

This is probably one of the best books I have ever read . The author provides an accurate account of the war, the politics behind the war and the key players, however, above all, the author keeps you interested and in suspense all the time. The horror of this war is portrayed better than anything Ive ever read.

James Bell says

Very good first hand experienced war

Excellent history of the end of Rhodesia. First hand story told by the men who fought it. Long with a dissatisfied ending, but reading true history is that way.

Fred says

I really liked this book. it gave me an idea of what went on during a turbulent time. It was amazing what a small group of committed individuals can do!

Austin Robert says

Excellent read.

Terrific look at a group of hardened warriors. Their restlessness in tracking the enemy is unmatched. Recommend to military history buffs, young enlisted and officers from the army and Marine Corps.

Margaret Gibbison says

Insightful

Wow, this amazing story brings back long forgotten memories of home. The tenacity and commitment of Rhodesian soldiers comes through and the achievements were incredible given the political odds. Stories like this need to be written, "lest we forget".

Anna Erishkigal says

I will completely side-step the issue of whether or not Rhodesian government was "racist" as seems to be in-vogue today and review this book solely as a military biography. The Rhodesian SAS was one of the most ingenious and lethal fighting forces the world has ever seen. The men you will meet in this book loved their country, feared what would happen if the communists took over, and ultimately, it turned out their fears were not unfounded.

The narrative is easy to read and you will feel like you are on patrol with these soldiers as they creep through the African bush, lay in wait, and then ambush their quarry with devastating accuracy, bravery and cunning. No study of asymmetrical warfare would be complete without studying the Rhodesian SAS. I see what has happened in that poor, sad country today, as well as what is happening in South Africa, and it's too bad they weren't given more time to transition gradually into a fully color-blind, democratic society.

Patrick Baty says

Very good - especially on the duplicity of politicians.

Ryan K. says

I am saddened that I could only give this book 5 stars - it deserves more.

I have always been interested in the South African bush wars and the insurgency and sadly, downfall of Rhodesia. Recently I have had the opportunity to focus my reading on this conflict and I can say undoubtedly, that this is one of the best books on the subject I could have hoped to read. Not only that, but as an avid military history buff, this book stands out by far as one of the best military history books of any modern day conflict I have ever read.

Aside from the perhaps unfortunate name, the book does a brilliant job of blending the first hand accounts of action throughout the conflict and tempers it with the very relevant background political motivations and wranglings that were happening. I found that part of the story really laid the groundwork for understanding why certain actions or operations took place or, how certain actions shaped the negotiations. It was really a fascinating and sad, sad story of betrayal and a beautiful country lost.

Mario Terras says

Outstanding book. I knew some of the men who served with Darryl but never had any idea of the risks they routinely undertook for our cause, country and all its people. If I had a dollar for every guy who walked up to me at Old Cranbourne during the war and said "there is a mole in our Combined Operations', I would have retired by the end of the war.

Fisher_FA says

This was my first foray into the Rhodesian Bush War and I was impressed by the extraordinary operations the Rhodesian SAS conducted. This book chronicles the war through many dozen anecdotes as told by the SAS operators that fought there. For the price (under three dollars) it was an excellent way to familiarize fans of special operations with this conflict without much in the way of politics.

The book is a quick, easy read.
