

No Easy Day Study Guide

No Easy Day by Mark Owen

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Summary

“No Easy Day” by Mark Owen and Kevin Maurer is the story of Mark Owen's career as a member of the Navy's elite unit known as SEAL Team Six. Owen tells of the challenges he faced as a candidate for SEAL Team Six. He met the basic requirements for this candidacy. He had been a Navy SEAL for several years and had been deployed on two missions. SEAL Team Six had been established in the early 1980s to handle difficult missions including hostage rescue and infiltrating into enemy territory. It had been Owen's dream for many years to become part of the legendary and mysterious Team Six.

After passing the rigid requirements and rugged training in his nine months in the Green Team he was notified that he was accepted in to the elite Team Six. His first deployment was to Afghanistan in 2005 after the American invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq. The United States had vowed to kill or capture the terrorists who had been responsible for the devastating terrorist attacks on New York, Washington, D.C. and Shanksville, PA on September 11, 2001. Their number one target was the terrorist leader of al Qaeda, Osama bin Laden.

Owen spent his time in the Middle East in deployment both in Afghanistan and Iraq. He had been part of the team that was sent into Tora Bora after bin Laden had been spotted there. But it was a wild goose chase. The team could never find a trace of the terrorist leader. Owen had missions that included the pursuit of insurgents, Taliban leaders, arms dealers and terrorist recruiters. His was a sharpshooter and often played the role of point man – the top shooter of a squad. He was also on the team who rescued Captain Phillips who had been kidnapped by pirates on the high seas. The Team was able to rescue Phillips unharmed, kill three of the pirates and apprehend the fourth. It was then that Washington took note of the outstanding valor and skill of the men of SEAL Team Six.

In 2011, there was speculation about a secretive mission that was in the offing. Owen was on leave but received a message from his boss to attend a meeting. It was at the meeting he learned that he had been selected for a special mission. The exact nature of the mission wasn't initially divulged. Those selected for the mission were only told that they'd be training in North Carolina in preparation for the mission. Eventually, Owen and the others learned that they were going after Osama bin Laden. The CIA had found him living in a suburb in Pakistan. Their mission was to capture or kill the most wanted man in the world.

The mission was a daunting as well as historic one. The Team members were given as much intel as the CIA had but they knew nothing about the layout of the large house where bin Laden allegedly was living with a number of other people. Owen and the others trained, planned, prepared and practiced for weeks. They were ready to go but had to wait until the President gave the final word. After many anxious days, they got the green light and were on their way to Pakistan to avenge America and to make history.



Chapters 1 - 2

Summary

The Mississippi heat got to SEAL Team Six candidate, Mark Owen, during training in a kill house in 2004, seven years before he would be on board a Black Hawk heading to Abbottabad, Pakistan. He was in a nine-month selection course known as Green Team. Not everyone would make the team. A team of instructors were watching their every move.

The candidate was already a SEAL but Seal Team Six in the Navy's counter-terrorism unit was the top position a SEAL could hold. Before each day of training, the trainees had long punishing workouts to exhaust them in order to create realistic circumstances. The candidates had already been through a month of rugged training in high-altitude parachuting.

Owen had become a SEAL in 1998. He had wanted to be a SEAL since he was thirteen. He had been deployed to Iraq in 2003-2004. He heard about the United States Naval Special Warfare Development Group or DEVGRU. One of the units under DEVGRU was Seal Team Six which specialized in counter-terrorism and hostage rescue. They also did reconnaissance by infiltrating into enemy territory and were tasked with the counter-proliferation of deadly weapons.

Before being eligible to try out for Seal Team Six, the candidates had to be SEALs with two deployments process and be able to pass a rugged physical fitness screening. Owen was exhausted and didn't feel he was in the best shape. He had barely passed some of the trials on the first day and feared he wasn't going to make it. After the screening, he was told he'd be notified if he made it within the next six months. He was in the midst of a SEAL Team Five deployment in Iraq when he was notified that he'd passed screening and would be getting orders to report for Green Team.

During Green Team he placed as much pressure on himself as the instructors did. If he got distracted by mistakes he made, he'd make more mistakes and get cut. There were two base locations for SEALs – San Diego, California, and Virginia Beach, Virginia. Owen could always rely on his ability to shoot. He could outshoot most of his peers. He'd grown up with guns in Alaska and had his own .22 rifle when he finished elementary school.

CQB (close quarters combat) started at dawn with half the class going to the range. The "range" at Green Team training wasn't a typical one; it had obstacles, burned out cars and series of targets. Something new was thrown at the men to keep them on their toes. The pace was fast. Those who lagged behind would probably be heading back to their home base. Each week, fewer and fewer remained.



The men had to anonymously rank the top five and bottom five candidates from time to time. Charlie and Steve, two East Coast SEALs were always in Owen's top five. They had both been CQB instructors and it showed. After CQB training, they went on to "explosive breaching, land warfare and communications." (41) They spent weeks practicing boarding boats from the water. They trained on accessing the beach for raids and then disappearing back into the water. The last month they did drills on VIP security details. The instructors did as much as possible to mimic real battle conditions during training. They'd be paged in the middle of the night to report in. Mental toughness was as important as physical readiness.

When Green Team training was nearing its end, candidates were drafted by individual squadron leaders. Owen, Steve and Charlie were selected to be on the same squadron. The next day, the squadron was preparing for deployment to Afghanistan. Everyone started letting their hair and beards grow. The new members of the squadron joined the senior members. Owen felt at home. He had made it through Green Team and now he had to prove himself all over again.

Analysis

The information included in these chapters is important because it provides Mark Owen's background that made him eligible for selection to the elite team that was tasked with raiding Osama bin Laden's secret hiding place and capturing or killing the world's number one terrorist.

Owen describes the rigorous training and screening that he had to undergo to make the cut for SEAL Team Six which is the top position a Navy SEAL can aspire to. His deployments after making the cut also gave him credibility for the mission. The continuous training as a member of SEAL Team Six prepared him for dangerous and covert missions including the bin Laden raid.

Mark Owen is demonstrating to his readers how much he wanted to become a member of SEAL Team Six and what he had gone through to become a member of SEAL Team Six.

It is only natural for the general public to be curious about the inner workings of a secretive organization like the Navy SEALs. It is an inside glimpse of a world that very few people will ever share.

Vocabulary

extraneous, cadre, pinnacle, ballistically, reconnaissance, proliferation, deployment, stamina, verbiage, proverbial, reconfigured, modular, augmented



Chapters 3 - 4

Summary

It was 2005 when Owen was preparing for his first deployment to Afghanistan. Moving on from Green Team was referred to as advancing to “the second deck.” The SEALs were required to bring enough gear to be ready for anything. Owen packed four separate mission bags that included weaponry and other equipment.

In 2005 Owen and his squad were deployed to Afghanistan but were sent to Iraq to provide support for the Army’s Delta Force that had been hit hard. As Owen headed to Baghdad, he recalled the dangerous mission he had been sent on several years before. Owen was more seasoned for his second Baghdad mission. He had passed Green Team but was still the new guy. Delta’s base was in the Green Zone. Their headquarters was in former Baath Party buildings where Owen and his team would be staying.

Owen was part of the “roof team” that landed on buildings and conducted downward assaults on the target building. Other teams worked the assault on the buildings from the ground floor up. The copter the roof team used to land on building tops was called “Little Bird.” The overall mission was a joint effort. Pilots of the 160th Special Ops or SOAR piloted the copters. Special Ops pilots were considered the best in the world and were referred to as Night Stalkers because they did most of their work at night.

Their first mission was the pursuit of a high-level weapons dealer who was keeping the insurgency on its feet. Owen’s team was tasked with landing on one of the two buildings where the weapons dealer was holed up with a huge stock of weapons. His team would breach the roof door first followed quickly by the other teams’ breach of ground floor entrances. As they approached in the dark night, Owen saw that the pilot was pointing a laser beam at the target roof. How the pilots were able to target the exact rooftop in the sea of thousands at night baffled Owen.

The pilot lowered a skid and hovered over the roof. In ten seconds the four-man team was on the roof with the copter zooming away. The breacher set off an explosive to open the roof door. The sound of a door being blown from below was heard seconds later with shots fired. One of the Rangers realized they were on the wrong building. The shots were from the building next door. It was a rare case of pilot error. They had to move to the right building. A message of an “eagle down” meant that someone on the team had been hit. One of the Delta operators caught a bullet in the calf; others had been hit with shrapnel from hand grenades.

Owen and his team cleared the building east of the target but they couldn’t access the roof of the target building to fight their way down. Sounds of intense firefights echoed in the buildings then there was silence. A squad of Rangers was poised at the perimeters of the target area. M1 tanks and Bradley Fighting vehicles were staged a mile beyond the target. A commander ordered one of the Bradley’s to ram through a side wall of the



house. Shots from its 20mm cannon tore a hole in second story floor and fired until it ran out of ammo. A second Bradley was called in and fired until the second floor was on fire. Owen aimed and fired on an insurgent who was leaning out of one of the windows. The man was the first person Owen had ever shot.

Owen watched as a Delta explosives guy ran into the first floor to set off a charge that would be strong enough to level the building. The team waited but there was no explosion. They figured that that the timer wasn't set correctly. The EOD (explosives guy) and his breach team rushed inside and set a new detonator. With that, the bomb went off and the house collapsed. All that was left was rubble and clouds. They found six dead fighters who had been on the second floor. Had the roof team landed on the right building they would have been trapped by the barricaded fighters on the second floor. It was lucky they landed on the wrong building.

Analysis

These chapters describe some of the dangerous missions that Owen was deployed on and how he learned from each one. The inference is that his experiences all led to his being qualified for the most important mission of his or any SEAL's life – that of capturing or killing bin Laden. The U.S. military had been after bin Laden for years and he had eluded capture. Hunting him down was a primary focus of the military, especially the elite groups like SEAL Team Six.

This information is important to the story because it describes the different methods that SEAL teams use in their targeted assaults on terrorists and other wanted criminals. This material confirms that the men of this elite military force are highly trained, have special skills and capabilities, are valorous and carry out their tasks with precision and expertise. Owen portrays the men as selfless team players who consider being a SEAL as the ultimate honor. SEALs are patriotic and all the SEALs like Owen were eager to get revenge for all Americans in hunting down bin Laden.

Despite the reader's personal political choices, most will enjoy the minute-by-minute chronology of the lead up to getting bin Laden. It is a historic moment in the history of the United States.

Vocabulary

blunderbuss, variant, lanyard, insurgency, adjacent, shrapnel, thermobaric



Chapters 5 - 6

Summary

In December 2006, Owen and his squad were deployed to Western Iraq. He had spent some time working closely with the CIA on a recent deployment. Their mission was to stop couriers who were bringing foreign fighters and Iranian weapons across the Syrian border. The squad was also asked by Marines in Al Anbar to help them clear some houses in a Syrian border village where insurgents were being given safe haven.

The SEAL team was left off a mile or more away from the village so the enemy wouldn't hear the copters. It took the team an hour to get to the target village that cold night. The village was rundown and the smell of sewage was in the air. The teams split off to their assigned targets. Owen and his team entered the gate to the abandoned courtyard. Owen pushed open the unlocked front door and led the team in. There was no talking as the team moved down the hall and from room to room. They found a young man, two women and a small girl in one of the rooms. Owen frisked and cuffed the MAM (military-aged male), put a hood over his head and pulled the blankets off the women. He spotted an AK-47, a chest rack to carry ammo and a grenade secreted from open view.

Owen led the young man into another room to question him with the help of an interpreter. All the while Owen knew that the man would probably be released to fight again. Owen later learned that three of the other men in the young man's cell had been killed in a firefight with another SEAL Team. The team confiscated weapons, mines and explosives.

Owen was deployed back and forth between Afghanistan and Iraq on multiple missions. On April 8, 2009, the Maersk Alabama, a huge cargo ship with tons of supplies was attacked by pirates who kidnapped the captain, Richard Phillips and fled with him on one of the ship's large lifeboats. The USS Bainbridge was tracking the lifeboat. There were four pirates on board armed with AK-47s. Owen's team was called in for the rescue.

The pirates wanted \$2 million for the captain. Owen and fellow SEAL Phil flew to Africa in a C-17 cargo plane. When they arrived, a massive high-speed assault craft (HSAC) was lowered from the rear of the large cargo plane by parachute. An amphibious assault ship called the USS Boxer was scheduled to rendezvous with the team. After the SEALs jumped into the water, they spotted the USS Boxer waiting for them nearby. They got word that Captain Phillips had attempted a failed escape. The lifeboat was adrift and out of fuel. Captain Frank Castellano of the Bainbridge was negotiating with the pirates and convinced them to allow the Bainbridge to tow the life boat and float food and water to them in an inflatable. They agreed to take one of the pirates aboard who needed medical attention.



After Owen's team settled in on the Boxer, a small team of snipers, a commander and an assault team was sent to the Bainbridge. The remaining SEALs had to be prepared in case the life boat went on land. A SEAL named Gary was in charge of interrogating the captured pirate Wal-i-Musi. SEAL snipers got the three remaining pirates in their sights and fired killing them instantly. Two SEALs slid down the rope to the lifeboat. Phillips was tied up but unhurt. Phillips was disoriented but in good condition and thankful to be rescued.

Washington had become fully aware of what the SEAL teams were capable of and would demonstrate that they kept them in mind for other difficult missions.

Analysis

Everyone in the world is familiar with the Iraq war which was waged in 2003 presumably in response to the terrorist attacks on 9/11. These chapters describe Owen's responsibilities in both Afghanistan and in Iraq during the war and how men like Owen in special operations are repeatedly called upon to risk their lives in the defense of their country.

The on-going training of SEAL Team Six members is also described which underscores the rigorous requirements of the Team members and how they are expected to maintain top standards. The killing of the pirates who kidnapped Captain Phillips, which was told in a book and movie, is described to underscore the variety of missions that SEALs are deployed on. Owen makes the comment that this mission had alerted Washington to the team's capabilities in covert operations, a hint that the pirate mission put the SEALs in the forefront for the bin Laden mission.

The difficult assignments and dedication of the SEALs will be of interest to most Americans and people around the world to help them understand and appreciate the hard work and dedication of these men in keeping America safe and ridding the world of very bad people.

Vocabulary

periphery, stealthy, meandered, amphibious, drogue, barrage

Chapters 7 - 8

Summary

In the summer of 2009, Owen was running up an Afghan mountain that was 8,000 feet above Kabul, Afghanistan. He and his team were after eight fighters who had fled from a targeted compound. Owen locked on one of the fighters and took him out. Other SEALs got two more insurgents. The rest took off running.

The surviving fighters were racing down the back of the hill. Phil grabbed an RPG (rocket-propelled grenade) lying next to one of the dead fighters and fired. The fleeing enemies were hit by shrapnel. An AC-130 swooped in and pounded the fleeing fighters with 20mm cannon fire. All the insurgents were dead or mortally wounded. Phil sent his tracking dog off which he dubbed the "hair missile" to hunt down more insurgents. The dog located an insurgent in a ditch waiting to ambush the men. Grenades thrown into the ditch removed the threat.

It was a busy time. If Owen wasn't deployed he was in training. He was still back and forth between the two war fronts. It was difficult for SEALs to maintain their personal relationships because of their dedication to the SEALs and because of their frequent and long absences. The families supported the SEALs but really didn't know what they did. The families knew that there was always the possibility that their SEAL would never make it home. The SEALs knew that, too. Like all the SEALs, Owen loved what he was doing.

By 2009, Owen was on his eleventh combat deployment in a row. An American soldier went missing at the beginning of summer. The SEALs made it their priority to find PFC Bowe Bergdahl who had disappeared from his camp. A Taliban group captured him and moved him to the Pakistan border. The SEALs tracked down every lead and made several rescue attempts but all to no avail. They feared that the Taliban would sell Bergdahl to a terrorist group in Pakistan. When they received word that Bergdahl was in Kabul, they prepared for immediate deployment.

Two teams of SEALs advanced from different directions toward the compound where the American soldier was allegedly being held. As soon as the SEALs stepped off their Chinook, they were met with artillery fire. One of the SEALs fired a single-shot grenade launcher and lobbed the explosive into the doorway of the house. The shooting from the house stopped giving the SEALs time to close in on the house. They cleared the house, killing some fighters while others fled.

There was no sign of Bergdahl. Owen and a team of snipers pursued two insurgents who were escaping on mopeds. Owen hit them with a grenade while the snipers opened fire on them. One of the rounds ignited an RPG on the backpack of one of the fighters making him light up like a firecracker. They never found Bergdahl on that recon.



The squad was deployed to the base in Kunar, one of the most dangerous regions in Afghanistan, for an operation that was to be conducted in the mountains. The mission was to capture or kill a group of Taliban bigwigs who were meeting together. The patrol left on foot and took hours to near the target compound. They found the perfect spot that overlooked the compound and began to creep toward it.

They entered through an unlocked door and were immediately confronted with two men who they quickly took out. A grenade was thrown into a room of fighters killing them all. Firefights broke out over the terrain surrounding the compound. An AC-130 flew onto the scene pursuing a group of fighters to the north. Owen and his team cleared the buildings and alleys in the compound. Most of the men were fighting without protective gear because it had been too heavy for their climb.

A short time later, there was an all clear. Their next task was to take photos of the dead and gather up weapons and explosives as well as computers and papers. This operation was called SSE or sensitive sight exploitation. There were in a crunch for time. It was four A.M. and it would soon be light. Drones were reporting that more fighters were converging on the compound. They set the weapons and explosives on fire in the courtyard and ran for it. The SEALs had not incurred any serious injury. They had successfully taken the compound with only a dozen well-armed fighters.

Analysis

This is interesting and important because it fills in some blanks about the story of a U.S. soldier who went missing in Afghanistan. The hunt for a missing Army soldier is one of the focuses on this section. The SEALs were not able to track him down; however, this story will be of interest to many people who followed the news of the return of PFC Bowe Bergdahl to America in 2014 in exchange for five Taliban fighters.

Owen includes this story not only because it's part of his background but because he was aware of the controversy over this missing soldier. It is his attempt to clear the record. Owen's account of the mission will provide some history on this story which will be of interest to many Americans who followed the story of the missing soldier. Owen's account of their search for the soldier is evidence that America hadn't forgotten Bergdahl when he originally went missing. The U.S. had sent its finest force to try to find him.

Readers will be heartened by the dedication and selflessness of the SEALs who tried to rescue a missing soldier and bring him back home.

Vocabulary

ridgeline, intermittent, propellant, volatile, impenetrable, nefarious, inordinate

Chapters 9 - 10

Summary

Owen was home on a three-week leave in the early spring of 2011. He had just returned from deployment in Afghanistan during its cold winter months. After numerous deployments after 9/11, he was glad to be home. It was getting more and more difficult to get approval for a mission. There were more restrictions than in the past. Policymakers asked that the Team ignore past lessons in favor of political solutions. No more ambushing fighters in their compounds. When interrogating suspects, SEALs had to ask them if they had been abused. The fighters were savvy enough to realize that we were playing by different rules and took advantage of it. There were rumors that a top-secret mission was in the pipeline.

Owen and other Team members were called into a special meeting and told that they would be going to North Carolina to train for a special mission. Everyone was puzzled about the nature of the mission that was veiled in secrecy. During the first day of training, the men learned that they were going after bin Laden! He had apparently been found in Pakistan.

The list of team members consisted of 28 names that included an EOD (explosives) tech, an interpreter, and a combat assault dog named Cairo. Owen would be in charge of the team responsible for guesthouse C1 in the compound. It was separate from the main house. Owen realized that the guest house was peripheral to the main target. He would rather be going into the main house where bin Laden was but he focused on what he was tasked with. There was a mock-up of bin Laden's compound in amazing detail. The estate was a one-acre compound with a three-story main house in a residential neighborhood.

Osama bin Laden formed al Qaeda in 1993 to wage a war against the United States and to inspire Muslims to follow him in creating an Arab caliphate across the Middle East. His first strike against the U.S. was in 1996 when al Qaeda blew up a truck in Saudi Arabia which killed U.S. soldiers based there. There were other attacks that culminated in the devastating attack on September 11, 2001. Coalition forces had been hunting bin Laden down ever since.

The CIA had tracked the al Qaeda chieftain through one of his couriers. The CIA learned of the courier, Ahmed al-Kuwaiti, through the interrogation of Mohammed al-Qahtani who was called 9/11's "twentieth hijacker" but had missed the attack because he'd been denied entry to the U.S. The CIA started to track al-Kuwaiti which led to the discovery of the compound in Pakistan where bin Laden lived.

The CIA had concluded that bin Laden lived on the third floor and his son Khalid on the second floor. There would be wives and children in the complex. The code word for bin Laden was "Geronimo." In Washington, President Obama and his advisors were still in



the midst of discussing different options. The SEAL plan was only one of several options. The plug could be pulled on the operation at any moment. The President was considering a massive air assault by the Air Force. The Defense Secretary favored that plan because it would not be considered an invasion of a sovereign nation. The SEAL plan would put U.S. military on Pakistan soil. The U.S. did not have a great track record in successful commando raids. The downside of the air raid was that everything would be obliterated and there would be no proof that bin Laden was dead.

Once the plans were solidified, the SEALs began practice drills. The men were helicoptered to a life-size mock up of the compound. It was hoped by Team leaders that the training would convince the White House that they could successfully carry out the mission. Owen had never trained at this level for any other mission. After training was concluded, there still wasn't official word about whether the mission was a go.

The team convened for a final dress rehearsal that was observed by a group of VIPs that included Admiral Mike Mullen, chairman of the Joint Chiefs, Admiral Eric Olson, Spec Ops commander and Vice Admiral Bill McRaven. Each assault team leader briefed the VIPs on their plans. The commanders were most concerned with the perimeter team. How would they handle on-lookers or the Pakistani police or military? A Washington lawyer made it clear to the men that this was not an assassination mission. Capturing bin Laden would be preferable. The dress rehearsal went well but the team still didn't know if they would actually pull the raid off.

Analysis

This section describes the lead up to the bin Laden mission. There was speculation about a top-secret mission. The SEALs were speculating about the nature of a top secret mission that was in the mix. The general public will enjoy this section learning that the SEALs themselves were not initially told about the purpose of mission that they were being deployed on until they showed up for training.

The excitement and honor that Owen and the other SEAL Team Six members felt about being part of history, of possibly capturing or killing the number one terrorist in the world jumps off the pages. Owen wants to convey to the reader the tension that the Team members experienced waiting to learn if their mission was a go or not. Owen wants the reader to understand the stress that the Team was under. The physical training was the easy part – waiting to get the green light was the hardest part.

The tense lead-up to the mission will provide interesting reading in this behind-the-scenes lead up to this important mission.

Vocabulary

specter, peripheral, caliphate, complacency, concertina, reconnaissance, commando, contingencies, maelstrom



Chapters 11 - 12

Summary

Owen was a few hours early for his flight out of Virginia Beach and was anxious to go. They finally got word to move forward with the mission. They were being flown to Jalalabad in a C-17. The first leg of the trip to Germany would take nine hours. After a short break, they would make the eight-hour trip to Bagram then a short hop to Jalalabad.

On the flight, Owen talked to Jen, a CIA analyst who was one hundred percent certain that the man in Abbottabad was bin Laden. She'd been working on tracking him down for five years. Jen was not in favor of the ground assault; she was for bombing it. Jalalabad was just a few miles from the Pakistan border. Owen had been to J-Bad so often that it felt like home.

Several more SEALs already assigned to Jalalabad were briefed on the mission. Since Will spoke Arabic he was the only one made part of the mission. The other SEALs would be support in case of trouble. Owen filled Will in on the details of the plan. What also made this mission different was that in the majority of cases the plans were executed shortly after they were finalized.

Washington's main concern was whether they could trust the intelligence. Other than Jen, the analysts all gave its credibility on sixty percent. The SEALs weren't aware of the doubt about that mission that still existed in Washington. Mark, Charlie and Will debated about the part of the body bin Laden should be hit in if he were to be shot. The face was out – they wanted proof of death. Jay would be poised to make admiral if the mission was carried off. It would also get Obama elected again. The third was supposed to be the “go” day but the cloud cover ruined that plan.

They got the word that the President had given them the green light to defend themselves in the event that they engaged with Pakistani military or police. If confronted, they were to tell Pakistani authorities that they were on a mission to find a downed drone. The SEALs thought the excuse was outrageous since Pakistan was an ally of the U.S. If a drone had been downed, U.S. authorities would have contacted Pakistani officials. But what story would have adequately explained the presence of twenty-two SEALs armored to the teeth and equipped with the latest high-tech gear accompanied by an explosives specialist and an interpreter?

At the end of the brief, the commander of DEVGRU joined the group. He delivered the final word. The President had approved the operation. It would be launched the next night. The next day, Owen ate breakfast with a couple of SEALs; no one mentioned the mission. After he returned to his quarters, Owen began slowly preparing for the mission. He dressed in his Crye Precision Desert Digital combat uniform and gathered his gear including bolt cutters and antennae for the radios. His helmet weighed less than ten



pounds and was equipped with night vision goggles. The helmet was known to stop enemy assaults including AK-47 bullets. He tested the red laser on the scope of his rifle and made sure there was a bullet in the chamber. Owen looked at a piece of paper that had an aerial image of the compound and a list of radio frequencies for inner communication. He studied the photos of several terrorists who were staying at the compound and a picture of bin Laden and his son aged progressed ten years.

By the time the sun set, everyone was ready to go. They were deployed on two buses that took them to the Black Hawk helicopters waiting for them. Owen was one of the last to board his copter. After a fifteen-minute flight the pilot announced that they were crossing the border into Pakistan. The next announcement was that they were ten minutes away from the target... then six minutes... then one minute. The crew chief slid the door open. Owen fixed the fast rope bar into place. Leaning out of the opened door, Owen saw the compound come into view. It was past midnight. The pilot hovered over the target spot but was having a hard time keeping the copter steady. It seemed that something was wrong with the copter. The pilot announced that they were going around. The copter veered to the right and tried to struggle its way out of the compound air space but slipped closer and closer to the ground. Everyone was holding on for dear life. They were crashing... in bin Laden's backyard.

Analysis

In these chapters, the complexity of the mission to kill or capture Osama bin Laden is focused upon. There were many other people who were feeling stress about the mission from the U.S. President who had to make the final call to a young dedicated analyst who wanted nothing more than for the mission to go smoothly.

The concerns of Washington about the mission are revealed in this section. The figure of Jen, who was a dedicated CIA analyst, is introduced in this section. She devoted five years of her life to trying to track bin Laden down. The mission was personal to her; it was the culmination of years of work in bringing the terrorist to justice.

Owen's account of the preparations for the mission by the unit is another inside look at the covert mission. It showcases the Team's attention to every detail to ensure that the mission would be successful at every level. It portrays the members of the Team actually becoming one body, one source of strength that will defeat the enemy.

The readers will understand the fear and doubt that the team members experienced with the crash of the copter literally in bin Laden's backyard. The incident shows the human side of the SEALs. As much as they prepared and thought of everything, members of SEAL Team Six is after all just like everyone else – no one ever knows for certain what might happen.

Vocabulary

debacle, fuselage, preposterous, prosthetic, pungent, ambient



Chapters 13 - 14

Summary

Owen braced for the crash fearing that the copter would roll and crush him underneath. He was partially outside the open door. Walt did his best to pull Owen back in. He figured he'd either die in the crash or in a firefight. The helicopter dug into the earth, nose first. The tail caught on the privacy wall which kept the rotor blades from hitting the ground. Everyone hurried out and ran from the wreck. They had to block out the crash and carry out their orders.

The team had allowed thirty to forty minutes to complete the operation based on how much fuel the helicopter had left and a possible conflict with Pakistanis. Charlie was at the locked iron gate setting an explosive as Owen checked the prayer room which was empty. The explosion tore a hole in the iron gate that allowed everyone to enter and rush to their assigned tasks. Despite the wreck, the team was on schedule. The second helicopter was hovering over the grounds. Instead of dropping the second assault team on the roof, they roped down on the ground and headed to the gate on the north side of the compound. Owen and Will raced to the guesthouse where al-Kuwaiti allegedly lived with his wife and children. The other assault team blew open the gate but was confronted by a brick wall. The SEALs knew that the element of surprise was gone.

As another member of Owen's team raced up the stairs to the roof of the guesthouse, he was met with fire from AK-47s that barely missed him. Someone was firing from inside. Owen and Will let loose with a barrage of fire through the metal door. Will called for al-Kuwaiti to come out. Owen was about to attach the breaching charge to the door when suddenly someone was unlocking the door from inside. A woman cracked open the door and called from within. It could have been a ruse but the woman was holding an infant. The woman was Mariam who told Will in Arabic that her husband was dead, they had killed him. Owen stepped inside and made sure al-Kuwaiti was dead then proceeded to clear the rest of the guest house then headed back outside toward the main house.

At the main house, Charlie set the charge to blow open the north door waiting for Tom to give him the go ahead after his team had cleared the south side of the house. Tom's team was on the first floor and spotted a man's head sticking out of one of the doors of a long hallway. It was Abrar al-Kuwaiti, Ahmed's brother. They rushed down the hall to see Abrar on the floor wounded. His wife, Bushra, jumped in front of him to shield him. They were both shot to death in an instant. They saw another woman and several children. Tom grabbed an AK-47 in the room and unloaded it. With nothing more to find, Tom gave Charlie the go ahead to blow the north door. Owen and Will rushed around and joined Charlie's team that was entering the door after it was blown open. SEALs from the second assault team led by Jay that originally planned for a roof landing, also piled in the north door.



A second metal door was impeding entrance to the second story. Charlie set up his third explosion of the night. Jay was shocked to learn that the first assault team's copter had crashed in the backyard. There was no major damage to the copter but the pilots proceeded to destroy all the instrumentation. Jay rushed out to the wreck and immediately summoned another CH-47 to head to the compound. Charlie blew open the metal door that led to the second floor. The SEALs began to ascend the stairs not knowing what to expect. If bin Laden was there, he knew they were there and coming after him.

Analysis

This section provides the tick-tock of the mission after the helicopter crash in bin Laden's back yard and the killing of the courier in the guest house. Owen takes the reader inside bin Laden's house and tells of the surprising lack of fight that was put up by the terrorists – especially bin Laden.

There were different accounts of how the raid and the killing of bin Laden went down. Owen provides this information to clear any doubts about what occurred and provide the general public with the real story.

Again this is a historical event that most Americans will appreciate learning about. They will be privy to information that was heretofore was classified and not known to the general public.

Vocabulary

shrapnel, unscathed, perimeter, breaching, bulletproof, latticework



Chapters 15 - 16

Summary

As the SEALs made their way through the pitch black darkness they remained completely silent. They were at the advantage in the dark with their night vision goggles. Reaching the second floor, the assaulters fanned out and cleared the rooms. There was a dead body on the landing to the third floor. It was Kahlid bin Laden, the terrorist's son. Owen headed to the third floor with a small group of SEALs. Thus far, the men were surprised that there hadn't been more of a fight. By their calculations, the only man left in the house was bin Laden. They expected bin Laden to either put up a fight or strap on a suicide vest and take them with him.

There were three doors on the third floor. The point man fired at a man who peeked out of one of the doors. It was impossible to tell if he hit his target. The three SEALs crept slowly toward the open door. Two women were crying over a man lying at the foot of a bed. One of the women rushed them but was driven back into the room. The SEALs shot the guy in the chest to make sure he was gone.

Owen bent down to get a closer look at the dead man. He thought it was bin Laden, compared the man's face with photos he had of bin Laden and took multiple pictures of him. The younger woman in the room had caught a bullet in the leg. Will was tending to her and learned that she was bin Laden's fifth wife. Owen took photos of bin Laden's face straight on and in profile. His hair was obviously dyed. He looked younger than Owen thought. Owen had Walt hold open one of his eyelids so he could take a photo of his lifeless brown eye.

Other team members were busy collecting computers, documents and videos. Outside the interpreter was dealing with a growing crowd of curious neighbors. A demolition man was preparing to blow the house until the brakes were put on. The house didn't need to be blown up; the downed helicopter did. Watching a grainy telecast of the scene, those in Washington weren't sure if the helicopter had landed and parked in the compound or had crashed. The EOD tech planted explosives around the fuselage, tail and main cabin of the copter. The other two copters were circling above waiting to pick up the team members. They were running out of fuel. They had ten minutes.

While Owen continued to take photos of bin Laden, Walt took blood samples for DNA identification. The wounded woman wouldn't talk. The other woman would only say that the dead man was "the sheikh." A little girl was asked who the dead man was and she immediately responded with, "Osama bin Laden." Finally, the woman also confirmed his identity. Jay felt satisfied that they got bin Laden and called it in to Admiral McRaven who in turn informed Washington.

The guys collecting intelligence on the second floor needed help. There was a volume of documents and electronic media that needed to be confiscated. Walt and another



SEAL pulled bin Laden out of the room and dragged him down the stairs. Owen found two unloaded guns. The terrorist head expected his minions to fight to the death or blow themselves up for the cause but he apparently had no intention to fight it out. It was Owen's experience that the higher a person was in an organization the bigger wuss they were.

SEALs and Cairo, the assault dog, swept the perimeter and cleared it. The guys on the second floor needed more time. They didn't want to leave anything behind yet the helicopters were running out of fuel. Bin Laden's body was placed in a body bag on the first floor. With just minutes remaining, everyone gathered on the grounds leave. Owen and Walt carried the bin Laden's body across the field. It was a struggle lugging the dead 6'4" body but they had to hurry. They were vulnerable to an RPG attack and the downed helicopter was about to explode. They finally made it to the Black Hawk. An additional concern was the certainty that Pakistani military and law enforcement was on their way to investigate the commotion. The SEALs were an invading military force. Seconds after take-off, the copter exploded. The other copter had been diverted to the front of the compound where the remaining SEALs were picked up. Owen glanced at the gauges on the copter's console. The fuel gauge was blinking red. That was not a good sign.

Analysis

In these chapters, Owen describes the aftermath of the killing of bin Laden including how the SEALs had to deal with the women and children who were living there. This is an important part of the story because it gives greater dimension to the SEALs. They are not just killing machines. They protected the women and children and understood the terrible trauma and fear that they felt with the raid of gunmen in the middle of the night. Owen wanted to send the message that they are not one-dimensional and they care about the safety of innocents when possible.

Owen describes in great deal the lengths the SEALs went to gather intelligence from the house in the limited time they had. Again, it puts the reader right in the house enabling them to understand the breadth and depth of the mission and how it was wrought with not only danger and risk but also tension and concern over not gathering all the data that was there.

The reader will have a greater understanding of the complex duties of the SEALs. Their work after bin Laden's death demonstrates that the SEALs contribute more than just their ability to capture or kill the enemy. They are able to provide vital intelligence that will help keep America safe.

Vocabulary

compartmentalizing, contingency, surreal, splayed, fuselage, avionics, sheikh



Chapters 17 - 19

Summary

The cabin was crowded. Walt had to sit on bin Laden's body because there weren't enough seats. No one could relax until they were over the border and refueled. Back in Abbottabad, the Pakistani military descended on the compound. They scrambled fighter jets armed with 30mm cannons and air-to-air missiles.

It was a forty-five minute flight back to Jalalabad. Thinking back, Owen was more terrified when the copter crashed than during the rest of the mission. He regretted that they had left a lot behind but there had been no choice. The Pakistani jets didn't follow them and the copters returned in one piece to Afghanistan proper.

In Jalalabad, Army Rangers took custody of the body that was taken on a plane heading for Bagram. Owen and some of his colleagues were on a plane right behind it in a C130. Jen was on the plane; she had an emotional reaction to the killing. The plane left the SEALs out at a hangar along the flight line in Bagram. They were met by a small group of FBI and CIA agents to help the SEALs go through the confiscated material. The photos that Owen took of bin Laden were all coming out good. After more DNA samples were taken from bin Laden, Rangers escorted the body to the USS Car Vinson for burial.

The guys dug into some food that was provided for them and gathered around a TV. President Obama was scheduled to speak to the nation. They were hoping his speech was scrubbed and that no mission details were included. At 11:35 pm eastern time, President Obama announced to the American people and the world that the U.S. conducted an operation in which Osama bin Laden had been killed. The President thanked the military for keeping America safe. The President revealed that the capture or killing of bin Laden had been a top priority after he took office. He lauded the small team of Americans that carried out the operation with "extraordinary courage and capability." (271) They figured they just got him re-elected.

It took less than four hours for word to leak that it had been SEALs who killed bin Laden. They watched the people who'd gathered in Times Square and in front of the White House cheering the death of bin Laden. Most of those gathered looked so young and didn't have any idea what life was like before 9/11.

As soon as the plane landed back home, Owen's phone and those of his colleagues were all buzzing. He looked through his messages. Everyone who knew he was a SEAL had left a message. They were all curious if he had been in on the bin Laden raid. He had hundreds of email and voice mail messages. Their commander greeted them and their fellow SEALs lined up to welcome them home. Once back at the command, Owen hurried to his car and headed home.



The next day he watched the cable news shows which focused on the raid. There was a lot of speculation about the operation, most of it wrong. Reuters wire service had taken photos of the bodies that remained. He avoided calls from family and friends.

When the team returned to work, Jay called the team in for a meeting. He stressed the importance of staying out of the media. He asked that they all keep a low profile. Owen was upset. They hadn't leaked anything. It had to be Washington. They would be in grave danger if their names leaked out. Many of the team members installed extra security in their homes. The speculation grew about who killed bin Laden and became more and more absurd. They were called "egomaniacs" with "gazelle legs and no waist."

The team got word that they were going to meet with the President in Kentucky. After landing in Kentucky, they were taken to the 160th Special Operations headquarters. Their meeting took place in a large conference room that was piled high with food. Everyone signed the frame of a framed flag that was to be presented to the President. A short while later they were taken to the auditorium that had a small stage with a row of chairs in front of it. President Obama and Vice President Biden arrived a short while later. Obama presented the men a Presidential Unit Citation which was the highest honor given to a unit. Obama gave a short speech and then invited everyone to have a beer at his house. They never got the call to have that beer.

Analysis

Owen provides an account about how bin Laden's body was taken away and eventually came under the custody of the Army Rangers who escorted it to burial at sea.

The men feel somewhat betrayed when there are multiple leaks about their involvement in the killing of bin Laden. They had orders to keep it secret – they kept everything they did secret so those orders weren't anything new.

They were very disappointed that it was apparently Washington or the White House that leaked the story in order to gain notoriety for themselves. The men were disillusioned in the process. This inside information will also be interesting to the reader who probably had no idea that the mission was top secret after it was talked about so openly in the press.

Vocabulary

bravado, perimeter, warmongers, jaded, fetal, cadre, cacophony, imperative, egomaniacs, ethos

Important People

Mark Owen

Mark Owen had long aspired to become a Navy SEAL. When he became a SEAL, he was often a point man or sharpshooter because of his shooting skills. He had learned to shoot at a young age under his father's supervision. He learned a lot from his father in addition to shooting straight. Mark learned to be tough and not give up which were traits that he would later on come to rely on as a SEAL.

Mark grew up in Alaska and owned a .22 rifle by the end of elementary school. His father taught him how to shoot and how to handle guns and rifles safely. He taught Mark to respect guns and what they could do. Mark kept that advice with him throughout his career. But Mark had a few tenuous moments leading up to his expertise with guns. On one occasion he and his father were hunting in the freezing weather and went back home to warm up. Although his father had showed him how to clear his gun properly he hadn't paid attention. He thought his chamber was cleared but when he squeezed the trigger the bullet exploded in the floor. It was a lesson he didn't soon forget.

Right out of high school, Mark wanted to join the military. His father wasn't against his becoming a military man but he thought he was too young to make such a big decision. His father wanted him to attend college for one year and then rethink his decision. After one year, Mark hadn't changed his mind. His father believed that his desire to join the military was a genuine and had no further objections. Mark did complete his degree at a small California college but always with the ultimate goal of joining the Navy.

After graduation, he was accepted in to BUD/S training and earned his SEAL trident in 1998. His first deployment was a six-month stint in the Pacific Rim and then on to combat duty in Iraq in 2003 and 2004. It was at that point that Mark aspired to a greater challenge. He knew of the legendary SEAL Team Six and decided to go for it. After a nine-month "try-out" he was accepted into the elite force. After hundreds of missions, he was one of twenty-four men chosen to capture or kill Osama bin Laden. It was a historic event and the pinnacle of Mark's career.

Osama bin Laden

Osama bin Laden was the founder and head of al Qaeda, a terrorist organization that carried out the attacks on America in New York City, Washington, D.C. and Shanksville, Pennsylvania, on September 11, 2001. Owen had been deployed on a mission to capture or kill bin Laden in late December 2001 in Tora Bora, a border region in Afghanistan near the Pakistan border. The terrorist leader had reportedly been spotted in the region by intelligence resources and Owen and the rest of the Team was charged with pursuing and nabbing him. However, either the intelligence was wrong or bin Laden



had a heads up and evaded capture. Bin Laden remained the world's most wanted person in the world for a decade.

In 2011, there was new information about bin Laden's whereabouts. Through the interrogation of a captured terrorist, the CIA learned that a courier who worked for bin Laden made frequent trips to and from a residence in Abbottabad, Pakistan. Through CIA surveillance and operations it was learned that bin Laden lived at the residence. Several options were presented to President Obama. Bombers could be sent in and the residence with everyone inside could be obliterated and turned to rubble. The second option was to send in a team of special operations military operatives who would attempt to capture or kill bin Laden and bring proof of death back with them. The latter option was a risky one but the President wanted proof that the terrorist was captured or killed, and therefore opted for a special ops mission. SEAL Team Six was selected for the mission.

After the team gained access to bin Laden's estate on the dark night of May 1, 2011, Owen tracked down and killed the courier in the guest house. He then went to the main house and with a small group of fellow SEALs climbed the stairs to the third floor and took down bin Laden who did not put up a fight. Owen took multiple photos of bin Laden to confirm his identity. Owen and others on his squad escorted the body back to the Jalalabad where Army Rangers took possession of his body for its eventual burial at sea.

Richard Marcinko

After the failure of a hostage rescue operation in Iran, it was decided that the Navy had to develop a special operations force for hostage and infiltration operations. Richard Marcinko was selected to develop this counter-terrorism unit called SEAL Team Six. When Marcinko first developed the unit, he decided to call one of the two teams he had "Six" so that the Soviets would think there were six special force teams instead of just two. Marcinko hand-picked the first seventy members of the unit from existing SEAL teams and from EOD units.

Jimmy Carter

In 1980, 52 Americans were being held hostage in the U.S. Embassy in Teheran, Iran. President Jimmy Carter order a military rescue of these Americans but the mission failed leaving the hostages behind and the president and the U.S. humiliated. SEAL Team Six was borne of this failure. The Navy decided to develop a Team of specialized Navy SEALs who could carry out dangerous and urgent missions.

Paul Scoon

Paul Scoon was the Governor-General of Grenada in 1983 when there was a Communist takeover of the small Central American country. SEAL Team Six had just



recently been organized and were sent on a mission to save Scoon who was to be executed. It was the Team's very first assignment. They carried out the mission successful and saved Scoon.

Manuel Noriega/Mohamed Farrah Aidid

In the early years of the organization, SEALs joined with Delta Force, the Army's elite special operations force, in the capture of Manual Noriega in Panama. In the early 1990s SEAL was called upon to capture or kill the Somali warlord Mohamed Farrah Aidid. The effort was later known as the Battle of Mogadishu which the book and movie "Black Hawk Down" was based on.

Master Sergeant Randy Shughart

Owen, along with another team of SEALs, was assigned to work with Delta Force in Iraq. After he joined the effort, one of the Delta Force officers gave him a copy of a pencil drawing of a Delta operator and a Little Bird, or small helicopter. Owen was told that everyone who works with the unit is given a copy of the drawing. Master Sergeant Randy Shughart, who was a Delta point man or sniper, was the artist. It was found with his body after being killed in Somalia during the Battle of Mogadishu.

Phil

Playing pranks on each other was one way to cut the tension. They used a grid to track who was committing them. The grid was the same one that they used for hunting down terrorists. Phil who as Owen's team leader was a great prankster – he'd cut shoe laces, he'd demagnetize credit cards with a large magnet and would glitter bomb gear. The guys sometimes got back at him. One night his car was fork-lifted away. Never the less, Phil remained the best prankster.

When Phil was wounded in a firefight, he called upon Owen to act as temporary team leader while he was recovering. Phil was flown away to the trauma hospital in Bagram. Phil had a military assault dog that was killed in the conflict in which Phil was hit.

Mohammed al-Qahtani

Through the interrogation of Mohammed al-Qahtani the CIA learned the identity of a courier who worked for bin Laden. A-Qahtani was known as the "twentieth" hijacker of the 9/11 terrorist attacks. As he was making his way to the U.S. to take part in the attack, he was banned from entry to the U.S. by immigration agents because they thought he was trying to illegally immigrate into the U.S. His identification of Ahmed al-Kuwaiti, bin Laden's courier, led to the discovery of whereabouts of the terrorist leader.



Ahmed al-Kuwaiti

Ahmed al-Kuwaiti was a courier for bin Laden and was dispatched by the terrorist leader on errands and missions. When the CIA learned of the existence of al-Kuwaiti, they began a surveillance of him and tracked him to bin Laden's residence in Abbottabad, Pakistan, where he lived in the guest house. Owen killed al-Kuwaiti at the bin Laden residence on the night of the historic raid.

President Barack Obama

After the CIA tracked down Osama bin Laden it was President Obama's decision about what actions the U.S. would take in bringing the number one terrorist in the world to justice. He weighed two main options. The first was to bomb bin Laden's residence and obliterate the entire estate. The second choice was to send in an elite force to either capture or kill him. The President ultimately decided on the latter scenario because he wanted proof of death. The President addressed the nation on the day after the killing and thanked the team of special military operatives who successfully carried out the mission.

Khalid bin Laden

Khalid bin Laden was one of Osama bin Laden's sons. Khalid lived on the second floor of the large bin Laden residence in Abbottabad, Pakistan, while Osama bin Laden lived on the third floor. As Owen and the other SEALs approached the stairway to the third floor, they found the body of Khalid on the landing apparently trying to warn his father of the invasion before he was taken out by a SEAL point man.

Jen

Jen was a CIA analyst who had devoted five years in trying to track down bin Laden. She had a personal stake in the outcome of the raid because she had invested so much of her time and effort in finding him so that he could be brought to justice. Prior to the raid, she told Owen that she was 100 percent positive that the man that the CIA saw in the Abbottabad residence was indeed bin Laden. After he was killed, she refused to look at his body. She had an emotional reaction to the killing because he had been so much of her life.



Objects/Places

SEAL Team Six

SEAL Team Six is the military unit that was deployed to capture or kill Osama bin Laden. The secretive organization's official name operated under the authority of the United States Naval Special Warfare Development Group or DEVGRU (Navy Development Group). "SEAL" stands for "Sea Air Land" special operations. When it was first established, there were only two teams. They called one of them "Six" to make the Soviets think they had six teams instead of just two. After the failed mission to rescue hostages held in Iran in 1980, the Navy saw a need for a special force capable of executing risky and urgent missions. SEAL Team Six was tasked with hostage rescue and infiltrating enemy nations, ships and military bases. The work of the secretive SEAL Team Six is assisted by intelligence and other support personnel.

Green Team

SEALs who have been with the Navy unit for several years and have been deployed on at least two missions are eligible for Green Team training. Green Team training is a nine-month screening process in which those who make the cut are advanced toward becoming a member of the legendary SEAL Team Six, the highest position that a SEAL can hold. Green Team training is rigorous and pushes the SEAL Team candidates to the edge. They are scrutinized for both their mental abilities and physical capabilities. Those who remain standing at the end and are advanced to SEAL Team Six know that their challenge has only just begun.

Operation Eagle Claw

Operation Eagle Claw was the failed mission ordered by President Jimmy Carter to rescue 52 Americans who were being held hostage in the U.S. Embassy in Tehran, Iran. After the failure of this high-profile rescue effort, the Navy saw the need to establish an elite force that would specialize in high-risk missions such as rescues and counter-terrorism operations. Without the failure of Operation Eagle Claw there may not have been a SEAL Team Six.

Operation Urgent Fury

Operation Urgent Fury was one of DEVGRU's first missions. In 1983, Grenada's governor-general Paul Scoon had been taken captive after a Communist takeover of the country. He was facing execution. The SEALs were sent in to Grenada and successfully rescued Scoon.



HAHO

High Altitude, High Opening (HAHO) parachuting was the most stealth and efficient way to infiltrate a location. Owen at first dreaded and hated parachuting but he had no choice; he had to get over his fear. It was the most common way SEALs were deployed on a mission.

SSE

Sensitive sight exploitation was an important responsibility of SEAL Team Six. After capturing or killing the enemy at a targeted location, Team members were charged with gathering weapons, explosives, computers, electronic data and documents that would be turned over to the CIA for their edification. SEALs also had to take photos of the dead. When Osama bin Laden was killed, multiple photos were taken of him, especially his face. It was a proof of death and a confirmation that it was indeed bin Laden who had been taken out. Photos were taken of bin Laden's face straight on and in profile. Owen took the photos and had one of his fellow SEALs hold open bin Laden's eye so he could take a photo of his eye.

Green Zone

The Green Zone in Baghdad, Iraq was the area that surrounded the U.S. military base that was established after the invasion of the country in 2003. The area was highly protected and was considered to be the safest and most secure location for U.S. military personnel and civilian officials to work and live during their tours of duty in Iraq. The Delta Force base where Owen was sent to assist the force was located next to the Tigris River in the heart of Baghdad and a short distance from the famous arc over the main street that depicted crossed swords held by strong arms and hands. The force's headquarters were in the former offices of the Baath Party, Saddam Hussein's political affiliation.

Abbottabad, Pakistan

The CIA followed one of Osama bin Laden's couriers and discovered whether the FBI's most wanted criminal was. Previously, it had been assumed that bin Laden was probably in a cave or tent somewhere. The CIA and SEALs were astonished when they discovered that the world's most notorious terrorist was living in the suburb of a large city in a comfortable house on a large estate. Abbottabad was named after British Major James Abbott. The suburb is also a home to Pakistan's military academy.



Kunar, Afghanistan

Kunar, Afghanistan, was thirty minutes from the large city of Jalalabad. It was considered one of the most dangerous regions in all of Afghanistan which was saying something. It was a mountainous region that was frequently patrolled by armed and aggressive Taliban soldiers. Owen and his Team were dispatched to Kunar to run an operation to kill or capture Taliban leaders who were converging for a meeting in a remote section of the area. SEAL Team Six engaged in volatile firefights with the Taliban took out many of the leaders while others fled on foot. None of the SEAL Team Six members sustained serious injury.

North Carolina

When Owen and the other SEALs selected for the bin Laden raid were first called together they were only told that they would be conducting a special mission and that they would be training in a remote area of North Carolina to prepare for it. Owen and the others were naturally curious about the nature of the mission – it was so secret it was even being kept from them! Finally they were given the word about their assignment. Pope Air Force Base in North Carolina was where the Team landed for their special training. Just before the bin Laden mission was launched, the SEALs had a “dress rehearsal” for the raid at their North Carolina training camp that was witnessed by a group of VIPs from Washington including the chairman of the Joint Chiefs and commander of Special Operations.

Survival Evasion Resistance and Escape

Survival Evasion Resistance and Escape or SERE was part of SEAL training. It was a course that focused on the management of stress. Instructors intentionally kept the SEALs tired and on edge to mimic real-life situations for them. In this exhausted state, the SEALs were forced to make decisions. The success of a mission was often pivotal on a SEAL’s ability to process information in a stressful situation and make the right decisions.

SAW

The squadron team room during Green Team training featured mementos from past missions. In addition to bloody hoods and flex-cuffs, the SAW or Squad Automatic Weapon belonging to 1st Class Neil Roberts was hung on the wall. Roberts had fallen out of a Chinook helicopter after it was hit by RPGs during Operation Anaconda in Afghanistan and was killed by the Taliban at the start of the U.S. invasion.



Themes

Dedication

In order to be a successful member of SEAL Team Six – and that's the only kind of SEAL Team Six member there is – dedication to duty and to the team is essential. Without complete loyalty to the cause by every member of the team, the difficult and dangerous missions that the Team is charged with would be impossible to carry out successfully.

During training the men are scrutinized not only for their physical capabilities and decision-making abilities, but their dedication to the team is assessed as well. Indeed, it may be the most important element in qualifying for the elite force known as SEAL Team Six. This need for complete commitment to the team transcends all others including personal relationships and family matters.

Navy SEALs spend most of their time away from home. They cannot discuss what they do with anyone including those with whom they have the closest personal relationships with. SEAL Team Six members have to be prepared to go on a mission when they are called. They have to drop everything and go. If they aren't able to provide this level of dedication, they will not remain on the Team.

During some off-time, Owen caught up on his training in Mississippi. It was a SEAL's responsibility to see that he kept up with his training. After the two-day session, Owen was looking forward to getting home and having a little fun. However, before he reached home, he was notified by text message to attend a meeting the next morning. It was an unplanned meeting and he couldn't imagine what it could be about. The meeting was the first about the bin Laden mission although the SEALs weren't told who they were going after initially but everyone had a good idea. There went his time off! He didn't mind. He couldn't wait to find out more details about the mission. His dedication was showing.

During training they learn that it is just as important to protect a fellow Team member as it is to protect oneself. A team member is taught to think of the Team first and the mission second. The survival of the Team and the successful execution of the mission has to be of the utmost importance to all Team members.

Isolation

Despite the fact that members of the elite Navy force known as SEAL Team Six literally travel the world on perilous missions in pursuit of the most dangerous people in the world, much of their lives are led in virtual isolation. They are largely insulated against the hurt and pain of personal relationships and the responsibilities of family and friends. They are prohibited from telling their personal friends and family members about their



missions and duties. They operate in the dark and in secret and alone with their fellow SEALs.

Even with wives, children and parents waiting for them at home, their closest relationships are with fellow SEALs. That is the case for one simple reason: their peers on the Team are the only people who know what they do, understand exactly how they feel about it, and share the dedication that is necessary to be a SEAL. They are insulated together from the rest of the world and they cannot let anyone else in.

Owen often spent holidays alone. On one occasion, Easter Day, Owen called his parents to check in. He was home and could have made arrangements to be with them. There were too many questions when he was with his family, especially his extended family. It was easier just to stay away from everyone. All he ever told his parents was that he was away on an assignment or in training. They knew that there was a lot more to tell but they learned not to ask.

This isolation leads to estrangements with family members. Their long absences often with no communication home lead to separation and divorce. Their duties and experiences are unique and their reactions to them are only fully understood by their fellow SEALs. The Team is designed that way – to shut everyone else out. That structure is necessary for the Team to enjoy the successes that it has. The men are expected to hold the Team as their top priority – anything less is not acceptable. Self-sacrifice is something that members of the elite force known as SEAL Team Six are expected to understand and embrace early on in their careers.

Secrecy

The very nature of being part of what is essentially a counter-terrorism organization, it follows that the majority of the missions that SEALs are sent on are top-secret endeavors. This vow to secrecy by the members of the TEAM is essential since the type of missions that they are sent on are generally matters of life and death. Good people could lose their lives if the operations of the SEALs were known in advance. A famous quote from the World War II era, “Loose lips sink ships,” applies to the covert element of the SEALs and says it all.

Members of SEAL have no break from the stringent secrecy under which they live. Even during time off with their friends and family, they are prohibited from discussing their missions past and present. Even innocent remarks made about a mission or a targeted individual could result in an aborted or failed mission or worse, the killing of an innocent party. The secret nature of SEAL Team Six creates a special bond between its members. They only have each other to talk about what they really do and what is planned.

After the killing of bin-Laden, the SEALs didn't have to be told that they couldn't talk about any element of the raid. They couldn't tell curious friends and family that they participated in the raid and couldn't tell curious reporters who sniffed them out which



member of the Team actually made the kill. SEAL Team Six was vexed when leaks came from Washington that the raid on bin Laden and his killing was carried out by SEAL. They had lived under maintaining secrecy as rule one. They couldn't understand how officials in Washington leaked information to the press that they would have lost their positions over.

Compartmentalization

SEAL Team Six is a secretive military organization that prior to the killing of Osama bin Laden had been largely unknown to the majority of the American people. The little that has leaked out about the Team tells of covert missions that are wrought with mystery and danger. It is conventional wisdom that the men selected and trained for this elite force are brave, daring, physically and mentally fit, and skilled in combat and covert operations and in the use of deadly force. To many these men are undefeatable killing machines who get their man!

This image of SEAL Team Six members misses one important element. These men are human and as such have human feelings – fear, anger, guilt, shame and doubt. These “human” frailties are buried beneath the shiny veneer of a public image of valorous warrior and indefatigable pursuer of evil, especially following the bin Laden killing. The intense training the SEAL Team Six members undergo places great focus on their loyalty, dedication and ability to hold the Team and its missions as their top priority. Without that level of commitment, the Team would not be successful.

What do these men do with the human foibles that exist within them? They can bury and repress them to a certain degree but that's not enough. The men are taught to compartmentalize the various elements of their lives and psyches. They are taught to view the enemy that they kill as deserving of their fates. They are able to separate the killings that they carry out without the blink of an eye from their own culpability. They do not consider themselves murderers thereby avoiding guilt and shame.

The men have family and friends – parents, wives, children, life-long friends. But the SEALs have been taught to put them in another compartment, one that is secondary to their main focus, the team and their mission. Without the ability to keep separate their duties from normal human emotions and from personal affiliations, SEAL Team Six would have failed long ago and would no longer exist.

Risk/Danger

That members of SEAL Team Six are not risk-averse is undeniable. Danger and personal risk is part and parcel to the job as a member of the elite military force. It's only human not to want harm to come to oneself and to avoid danger and peril. Since there are no hidden agendas when a man aspires to become a SEAL, the element of danger is on the table and the candidates are fully aware of the inherent risks including death that awaits them on the covert missions that they are deployed on.



The men who seek this type of career may be more than simply non-risk averse; the very danger that others would shun may actually draw these men to the Team. Perhaps the lure of danger and peril may be partly attributed to their upbringing. The familiarity with weapons at a young age has the potential to impress young boys. During the telling of his story, Owen often mentions the times with his father in Alaska's oppressive winter when they hunted and fished under the worst possible conditions. His father always urged him to keep going. It's not by accident that he recalls his father's influence on him during his missions as a SEAL. Those experiences were deeply bedded with him. Owen had a .22 by the time he completed elementary school – an adult sized rifle of deadly power and quite a weapon for a child to have. His father taught him about the capabilities of rifles and guns and also taught him the responsibility of a gun owner in keeping the weapon safe and secure. But the power of the weapon is what is more likely to influence a young boy.

The men of the SEAL unit also share an above-average patriotism which may overwhelm any fears and doubts that they may have in carrying out their duties. The intense training that SEAL candidates are required to go through confirms the need for this patriotism and to think of their country first and their team second. Worries about their own welfare and fears of death or injury are suppressed by this top-down training with country and team at its pinnacle.

Owen was shot at many times. He didn't necessarily get used to being shot at; it was part of the job. He had learned to duck. The most harrowing experience Owen had as a SEAL was when his copter crashed in what essentially was bin Laden's backyard. He and the others didn't have time to think that the big commotion would alert bin Laden and his men and that they'd soon be surrounded by armed terrorists. What frightened him more than anything was being stuck in the helicopter that was literally doing a cartwheel in bin Laden's yard. He was sure the copter was going to have a real bad landing and that he was going to die.



Styles

Structure

“No Easy Day” by Mark Owen and Kevin Maurer is separated into 19 chapters which cover the Mark Owen’s odyssey through the Navy’s elite SEAL (“Sea Air Land” special operations) unit that culminated in his participation as a member of SEAL Team Six which conducted the raid on Osama bin Laden and killed the terrorist. Owen takes the reader through the tough selection process known as Green Team training when he was a candidate for the SEALs’ most prestigious assignment - that of being a member of the exclusive SEAL Team Six. The story is told in a mainly chronological order from the rigors of the his training, examples of the perilous missions that he was deployed on and finally to what he considered an honor and the pinnacle of his military career – the killing of bin Laden.

Owen includes some flashbacks to his hunting and fishing expeditions with his father in the rugged Alaska winters. He juxtaposes those times with the stringent requirements of being a member of SEAL Team Six. He alludes that his childhood experiments in standing up to the Alaska terrain and weather helped prepare him for his career as a military special operations soldier.

The first chapter is preceded with Owen’s reasons for writing the book in “Author’s Notes” and the tension-filled time prior to the bin Laden raid which is repeated in subsequent chapters in “Prologue.” In an epilogue he again defends his right to write a book after he retired from SEAL Team Six and tell a story that he vowed to keep secret. He gives credits to contributors in “Confirming Sources” and provides some photos from some of his missions in “Photo Insert.”

Perspective

“No Easy Day” by Mark Owen and Kevin Maurer is non-fiction memoir of Owen’s career as a Navy SEAL culminating in his selection to be a member of SEAL Team Six that was tasked with raiding a compound in Pakistan where Osama bin Laden was allegedly living. Their mission was to capture or kill the terror chieftain.

The story is told from the perspective of Mark Owen because it’s his story. No one could better describe the missions of a Navy SEAL who had the experiences that he had. Owen was a seasoned military special ops man. Prior to the bin Laden raid, Owen had participated in literally hundreds of missions all involving risk and danger and potential loss of life. After several years as a SEAL he aspired to what was considered the top position for a SEAL – a member of SEAL Team Six. It was only SEAL Team Six members who were designated for the raid on Osama bin Laden.

Owen mentions that there are other versions of what happened the night bin Laden was killed. After retiring as a SEAL, Owen felt compelled to tell his story because he was



there and he wanted to dismiss the speculation and lore that arose after the historic incident. In other words, he wanted to set the record straight.

Kevin Mauer is an expert on special operations forces having been embedded with them in Afghanistan six times over the last decade. He has authored four other books including several about his experiences with special forces. He helped Owen write “No Easy Day.”

Tone

“No Easy Day” by Mark Owen and Kevin Maurer is unapologetically a book about the pursuit of bad guys who are often killed in the process. The overall tone of the book is serious and genuine and unemotional. Killing is part of a SEAL’s job description. Members of the Team must take the killing of enemies in their stride. Without such detachment the unit would not function properly and would ultimately fail. The emotion that does surface from time to time is focused on the feelings that the SEALs have for their Team and for its individual members.

Since the story is about the Navy’s elite SEAL Team Six unit it is expected that military jargon and phrases is used throughout. Firstly, using this phraseology was the way Owen communicated for years. Secondly, the narrative’s inclusion of such language brings realism and credibility to the story.

There are presumably not many other cultures that speak in acronyms as the military does as in a natural way. These men live in a world of emergencies and urgent events in which not a minute can be sacrificed. By speaking in an almost coded language, the men don’t mince words. Speaking in this strange mode of communication keeps everyone on the same page at all times. It is not just a clever or stylistic way of speaking the exchanges between the men must be on point so that there are no misunderstandings in the dangerous missions that they undertake. They don’t have much time to talk and less to explain what they mean.

Starting with the very name of the organization, SEAL Team Six, acronyms abound within the culture of an elite military operation. “SEAL” stands for “Sea Air Land” special operations and is a unit of the United States Naval Special Warfare Development Group or DEVGRU, a case of nested acronyms. SEALs often work with other counter-terrorism organizations including the CIA (Central Intelligence Unit) and the FBI (Federal Bureau of Investigation).

Sensitive Sight Exploitation, or SSE, is an important aspect of SEAL duties. Once a targeted location has been assaulted and cleared, members of the Team are charged with gathering intelligence in the form of documentation and electronic data and any other evidence that could be used against those captured or killed or that could be turned over to the intelligence community to help advance its knowledge of enemies of the United States.



When pursuing the pirates on the high seas that kidnapped Captain Phillips, a high-speed assault craft (HSAC) was used in the mission. RPGs (rocket-propelled grenades) were a danger to SEALs as were IEDs (improvised electronic devices). Important members of a SEAL Team Six mission are the EODs (Explosive Ordnance Disposal) techs who are expert at explosives and how to dismantle them.



Quotes

I was screwing up. The pressure I was putting on myself was worse than anything I'd hear from the instructor.

-- Mark Owen (Chapter 2 paragraph Page 31)

Importance: During the nine-month Green Screen training, Owen was under pressure the entire time fearing that after the screening was over he wouldn't be selected for Seal Team Six.

Before the attacks on September 11, Delta and DEVGRU were rivals. We were the two kids at the top of the block, and there was a raging debate over which unit was the best. With the war, there was no more time for rivalry and all that B-S had gone away. They treated me like a brother during the deployment.

-- Mark Owen (Chapter 4 paragraph Page 70)

Importance: After he made SEAL Team Six, Owen was deployed from Afghanistan to Iraq to help the battered Delta team. The above quote captures how the attack on 9/11 had changed lives including those of top military combat specialists in the nation.

One of the key lessons learned early on in a SEAL's career was the ability to be comfortable being uncomfortable.

-- Mark Owen (Chapter 5 paragraph Page 73)

Importance: This quotation demonstrates the selflessness and focus on mission that was essential for the SEAL team to be successful.

They [the families] knew very little of what was really going on in our lives. They never experienced the satisfaction of knowing that every IED maker or al Qaeda fighter we killed made the world a little safe, or at least made life easier for the soldiers patrolling along the roads in Afghanistan. They might understand it in theory, but they were always left at home to worry.

-- Mark Owen (Chapter 7 paragraph Page 107)

Importance: Owen explains the difficulty that SEALs had with their personal relationships. They lived apart and in another world from their families. They couldn't talk about what they were charged with doing; therefore, their families didn't really know what they did. The quote also provides the fundamental reason that the SEALs are so dedicated – they make the world safer.

The enemy had figured out the rules. Their tactics evolved as fast as ours. On my earlier deployments, they stood and fought. On more recent deployments, they started hiding their weapons, knowing we couldn't shoot them if they weren't armed. The fighters knew the rules of engagement and figured they'd just work their way through the system and be back to their village in a few days.

-- Mark Owen (Chapter 9 paragraph Page 143)



Importance: Owen is contrasting the freedom they had in conducting their missions in the earlier days to 2011 when more restrictions were placed on them. Many of their activities were restricted by rules that policemen operate by. In 2011, President Obama had taken over and his administration was obviously more concerned with civil rights and compliance with international law than the prior administration. It was a difficult transition for the SEALs who operated independently and mainly by their own rules. A natural resentment festered within them about the new rules and administration.

A1 and the remaining assaulters are going to rope onto the roof, make their way down onto the third-floor balcony, and clear the third deck.' If the intelligence was correct and everything went according to plan, that was the team that was most likely to encounter bin Laden first.

-- Jay/Mark Owen (Chapter 10 paragraph Page 168)

Importance: Jay was the commander of the SEAL at the time of the bin Laden raid. The CIA had determined that bin Laden lived on the third floor of the compound. The plan was for a squad of SEALs to enter from the roof and confront bin Laden first. At least that was the plan. The men were experienced and knew they had to be ready for changes to the plans at the last second.

While the rest of America was coloring Easter eggs, we were sitting on the biggest secret of our lives.

-- Mark Owen (Chapter 11 paragraph Page 179)

Importance: Owen captures the momentous and historic mission that he and his fellow SEALs were being deployed on in simplistic terms.

After three days of trying not to think about the mission, it was impossible to keep it from my mind now. If everything went as planned, in less than twelve hours we'd be roping into bin Laden's compound in Pakistan.

-- Mark Owen (Chapter 12 paragraph Page 198)

Importance: Owen describes his days and hours in anticipation of the bin Laden raid. This shows the human side of the SEALs who, despite their vast experience and training, still found nabbing the number one terrorist in the world a daunting prospect.

Nothing we were doing was new. We had all been on hundreds of missions. At the most basic level, we were clearing rooms like we learned in Green Team. Only the target and the fact that we were in Pakistan made this mission significant.

-- Mark Owen (Chapter 14 paragraph Page 234)

Importance: Owen brings the reader to the pitch black hallway inside bin Laden's house. He and the other SEALs had been through similar experiences numerous times but the significance of this mission was undeniable.



Bin Laden knew we were coming when he heard the helicopter... [and] had more time to prepare than the others, and yet he still didn't do anything. Did he believe his own message? Was he willing to fight the war he asked for? I don't think so. Otherwise, he would have at least gotten his gun and stood up for what he believed. There is no honor in sending people to die for something you won't even fight for yourself.

-- Mark Owen (Chapter 14 paragraph Page 247)

Importance: Owen found two unloaded guns which told him that bin Laden didn't intend to fight them. In the end the terrorist sheikh was exposed as a cowardly man who may not have believed in his own message and had just been after personal power.

None of us were huge fans of Obama. We respected him as the commander in chief of the military and for giving us the green light on the mission.

-- Mark Owen (Chapter 18 paragraph Page 271)

Importance: This quote captures the ability of the SEALs to compartmentalize. They weren't Obama fans but yet they could separate their personal feelings and respect him for his position. This ability to compartmentalize was important in carrying out their duties when they had to separate their emotions from the task to be done.

We'd kept this whole thing under wraps for weeks. Now, Washington was leaking everything, and we were going to get the lecture for it. It felt like it was only a matter of time before some of our names appeared on the news. We just killed the number one terrorist in the world. The last thing we needed was our names attached to it. We simply wanted to fade back into the shadows and go back to work.

-- Mark Owen (Chapter 19 paragraph Page 282)

Importance: When the SEALs returned they were overwhelmed with the reaction of the public and the press. Word had leaked that SEALs had conducted the bin Laden raid. The SEALs hadn't leaked it and assumed that it was Washington. The SEALs didn't want their names attached to the kill. They could very well become targets from terrorists who wanted revenge.



Topics for Discussion

Topic 1

What basic requirements were there for a SEAL to be considered for Green Team training and what did the training potentially lead to? Describe the characteristics of a man who would aspire to become a SEAL.

Topic 2

Describe the exercise in which Green Team candidates had to rank each other. Why would such a process be difficult? What reasons could the instructors have for including this exercise in the training?

Topic 3

Why did the SEALs plan an attack with one squad of SEALs landing on the roof and other assault squads accessing the building from the ground floor? How were they able to work in a coordinated manner?

Topic 4

What dangers existed when the bomb planted by the detonation tech didn't go off? Describe the pros and cons of the choices they had to set the bomb off.

Topic 5

Why did the SEAL team focus on the young man that they found in one of the rooms in the compound in Western Iraq? Describe some of the typical elements and phases of a SEAL targeted assault.

Topic 6

What dangers existed for the Captain Phillips during his rescue? What dangers existed for the SEALs? How did this play in the ultimate selection of the SEALs for the bin Laden raid and why?

Topic 7

What problems did SEALs often experience in their personal relationships? Why was it difficult for SEAL Team members to juggle job and home?



Topic 8

Why did SEAL Team Six members have to take photos of the fighters that they killed? What other information did they seek in the home or office of an enemy terrorist or criminal? What was this after-kill responsibility called?

Topic 9

What options did President Obama have in the pursuit of Osama bin Laden after his whereabouts were uncovered by the CIA? Describe the pros and cons of each choice. Could the President have decided to do nothing?

Topic 10

Why did Owen and the other team members feel a sting of disloyalty after the killing of bin Laden? How did they view the President? How did he support them and how did he let them down?