



Fifteen Days: Stories of Bravery, Friendship, Life and Death from Inside the New Canadian Army

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Long before she made her first trip to Afghanistan as an embedded reporter for *The Globe and Mail*, Christie Blatchford was already one of Canada's most respected and eagerly read journalists. Her vivid prose, her unmistakable voice, her ability to connect emotionally with her subjects and readers, her hard-won and hard-nosed skills as a reporter—these had already established her as a household name. But with her many reports from Afghanistan, and in dozens of interviews with the returned members of the 1st Battalion, Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry and others back at home, she found the subject she was born to tackle. Her reporting of the conflict and her deeply empathetic observations of the men and women who wear the maple leaf are words for the ages, fit to stand alongside the nation's best writing on war.

It is a testament to Christie Blatchford's skills and integrity that along with the admiration of her readers, she won the respect and trust of the soldiers. They share breathtakingly honest accounts of their desire to serve, their willingness to confront fear and danger in the battlefield, their loyalty towards each other and the heartbreak occasioned by the loss of one of their own. Grounded in insights gained over the course of three trips to Afghanistan in 2006, and drawing on hundreds of hours of interviews not only with the servicemen and -women with whom she shared so much, but with their commanders and family members as well, Christie Blatchford creates a detailed, complex and deeply affecting picture of military life in the twenty-first century.

From the Hardcover edition.

Fifteen Days: Stories of Bravery, Friendship, Life and Death from Inside the New Canadian Army Details

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From Reader Review Fifteen Days: Stories of Bravery, Friendship, Life and Death from Inside the New Canadian Army for online ebook

Jan says

In 2006 Taskforce Orion based on the Princess Patricias Canadian Light Infantry fought the Taleban in the Kandahar and Helmand area. During 4 visits to the area Canadian journalist Christie Blatchford came to know and shared their violent and traumatic experiences first hand. In this book she tells the story of fifteen key days during the tour. Most of the days/chapters center on the women and men, who were killed and grievously wounded by IED's, accidents and firefights. In addition we are shown the heartache, suffering, longing and pride of the families and friends.

Basically the book brings you to tears many times, but it is still a very important contribution and necessary reading for all who feel obliged to reflect on the worthwhileness and extent of the sacrifice brought in the current Afghan War.

John Conrad says

Having been overseas at the same time as Christie Blatchford's first and longest sojourn to Kandahar and knowing so many of the soldiers referenced in this narrative I found the book to be very personal. It has proven a read that I love deeply and at times cannot bear to revisit. I love Christie's courage to take her pen and her high intelligence into any corner. Over the course of this dangerous summer I came to know this fabulous Canadina and this has become one of my enduring gifts from the war. July 22 2006, one of the fifteen days described in this book on the Afghan War describes one of my own unit's convoys and the aftermath of a double suicide attack on the column. Thank you Christie for your talent and for writing this account. Love you always. #amongwalkingwounded

Nick Davin-isb says

The book is about the experiences of Canadian soldiers in Afghanistan. The author tells stories of many different soldiers, combining them to make one overall story of her experience. It follows Canadian soldiers from the start of their deployment at the main base, all the way into deep Taliban territory. The author discusses the deaths of many soldiers; showing how she and others reacted and coped with them. She talks about different events, from holding public clinics for Afghani citizens in small rural villages, to dangerous and hectic firefights against the fierce Taliban. I was a little confused by not using chronological order, because you would learn half-way through the book about the first Canadian soldier killed in combat, but had just read about many Canadian combat deaths in previous chapters. I enjoyed how the author brought emotion by showing the way the soldiers would cope with certain conditions into the book about the soldiers, not just retelling stories. I would recommend this book to anyone interested in the military or current events in the Middle East, looking for a true view, from the ground.

Derek Simon says

The book tells some very compelling stories about life in the Canadian military and puts a very human face on the Afghanistan mission. She is at her best when talking about the impacts on families, communities, and individuals.

The downside is she jumps all over the place with her stories, and throws around acronyms and names without really giving much background or explanation, so it is a bit hard to follow at times.

I'd be interested to hear more stories from the perspectives of the soldiers firsthand, and what they thought of these reporters being there. I am looking forward to reading "Outside the Wire".

Chris Almeida says

Fantastic and emotional account of fifteen days in the lives of Canadian soldiers in Afghanistan. Very recommended.

J.S. says

I found this book very difficult to read, not because it is not well-written, but because it is so harrowing. Sitting comfortably in my own house, it is too easy to forget that no matter what I may think of the foreign policy of my government, there are real men and women risking their lives to act out that foreign policy. They are not only soldiers, they are mothers and fathers, sons and daughters, husbands and wives.

Thank you, Christie Blatchford, for telling us just a few of the stories behind the war in Afghanistan and allowing the soldiers to speak to us in their own, very Canadian, voices.

Alexis says

WOW. This book gave me a glimpse into the Canadian military and what they are doing in Afghanistan. It's not an easy read as it's full of military terms and death, but I thought it was extremely well done. Journalist Christie Blatchford does an excellent job. She is able to step aside and let her subjects talk and doesn't hide the fact that she has respect for the military and the men who serve in it.

My brother joined the military two years ago, and my pacifist parents and I have struggled to understand this decision and his new way of life. I had a little more understanding after finishing this book.

Going to write one of my columns about this...

William says

I've always liked reading Christie Blatchford. She injects the personal without being cloying and her point of view is often unexpected but always interesting and well considered. Her approach to the war is non-judgmental but not her approach to the troops and their families. The book opens a fascinating window on our military operation in Afghanistan. Highly recommended.

Deb says

I found the writing style/structure of this non-fiction novel a little convoluted, but the content made it a worth-while read! The chapters are not arranged chronologically, but I recommend reading them in chronological order. (Author explains her structure decision in the Preface). The book illuminates the perspectives and experiences of certain soldiers who were serving in Afghanistan when the author was embedded there for periods of time between March and November 2006. Most stories revolve around the deaths of Canadian soldiers and I found myself sometimes wishing for more emphasis on other soldiers as well. However, it's still a great resource to help us get to know some of Canada's soldiers.

Kay says

I picked this up because I've only ever read fiction related to Canadians in World War One and World War Two. I am really glad I did - Blatchford does a great job weaving layers of soldiers' experiences and personalities, the stories of their families, and combat and military details. I think because of my previous emphasis of reading about WWI and WWII, I found the parts that mention the links between the soldiers from then and now to be really interesting. I will definitely be adding more non-fiction like this to my reading list. I have to say, Blatchford's author's note was fantastic. Her struggle with not making the book about her and how to tell these stories was insightful and really set the tone for how I read them, and how I now keep thinking over certain details, the bigger picture, and the importance of having a record like this.

Sarah says

I enjoyed this book . as a mother of a canadian soldier, who just happens to be mentioned in the book. it gave me an insight to what these young men and women experienced day to day. It made me cry, laugh and think and then cry again but worth every minute.

Gill Delplace says

A must read for Canadians.

Kelly says

I loved this book. The only reason I gave it a four star because I wish there was a tree of command with whose who on it because it starts to get confusing. The stories alone were very emotional and the way they were told was so well done. The organization of the book was also excellent and was one of the best parts. It's just such a well written book.

Jen says

What a joke. I put this book down several times because it pissed me off so much. I can't assign a rating because I think the subjects deserve more than this unfair and misleading account.

My major gripes are as follows

1. If your going to label the chapters by dates, the dates should be in chronological order
2. I hope the family of some of the soldiers' whose deaths are depicted haven't and never read this steaming turd of a book. While some are treated with respect, many are just used as a platform for personal politics.
3. So many things are factually wrong. I don't know if its "creative license" by the author, or she was just told whatever, but don't read this and think it's a complete account.
4. I hate that she makes some of the brave men (and woman) out to be victims who didn't want to be there. They were brave soldiers, who died in combat, friendly fire or not, who are heroes - not victims.

Tanya Brown says

I had a very hard time reading this book, not because it was terrible, but because of the content. It opened my eyes to what our soldiers went through and are going through.

The way the author wrote it, the chapters are not arranged chronologically which made it very confusing for me; one chapter a soldier dies and the next, he's alive. I also found that she uses a lot of acronyms and although there is a glossary, I felt she didn't really need to write it this way; it's almost like she didn't consider who her audience was. I also felt that she included a lot of details that wasn't meaningful for the story; I do understand that she was writing it from interviews given to her by these soldiers, I almost felt like she had to include everything which to me to me wasn't needed.

I am glad I finished it; it did take me a while to, but, like I said, it wasn't because it was a terrible book, just difficult to read because of what these soldiers went through. I can't imagine walking a day in their shoes. Makes me very proud to wear my Poppy right now.

