



Hammerhead Six: How Green Berets Waged an Unconventional War Against the Taliban to Win in Afghanistan's Deadly Pech Valley

Ronald Fry , Tad Tuleja

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Two years before the action in Lone Survivor, a Green Berets A Team conducted a very different, successful mission in Afghanistan's notorious Pech Valley. Led by Captain Ronald Fry, Hammerhead Six applied the principles of unconventional warfare to "win hearts and minds" and fight against the terrorist insurgency.

In 2003, the Special Forces soldiers entered an area later called "the most dangerous place in Afghanistan." Here, where the line between civilians and armed zealots was indistinct, they illustrated the Afghan proverb: "I destroy my enemy by making him my friend." Fry recounts how they were seen as welcome guests rather than invaders. Soon after their deployment ended, the Pech Valley reverted to turmoil. Their success was never replicated. Hammerhead Six finally reveals how cultural respect, hard work (and the occasional machine-gun burst) were more than a match for the Taliban and Al Qaeda.

Hammerhead Six: How Green Berets Waged an Unconventional War Against the Taliban to Win in Afghanistan's Deadly Pech Valley Details

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From Reader Review Hammerhead Six: How Green Berets Waged an Unconventional War Against the Taliban to Win in Afghanistan's Deadly Pech Valley for online ebook

Benjamin Neely says

This was a great book! It provides some detail in to the early successes in the Pech valley. Understanding those early successes, and seeing the changes since then is telling. I think if we had kept with CPT Fry's strategy we would be in a much better position than we are now. I f you like military history, this is a great book.

Debbi Faust says

I won this book through Goodreads. I let my husband read it since these are the kinds of books he likes to read.

These are his thoughts about the book....."It is a very well written story of how the Special Force Soldiers are trained to do their job. I would definitely recommend this book to anyone who is interested in reading about the war against Afghanistan. (It reminded me of my army days in Laos in the early 60's.)"

A Burrow says

Excellent unconventional methods to win conventional wars. An absolute read and strategy for today and the future.

Excellent unconventional methods to win conventional wars. Should be a required read for military strategy for today and the future.

Nick says

"Hammerhead Six" is a book that everyone should read. It doesn't glorify war, but tells the story of how a team of Americans made a positive change in a war-torn valley in Afghanistan later known as the Valley of Death. Captain Fry's story of his team's work in the Pech Valley is inspiring and a tribute to the power of understanding and cooperation. It's a grand adventure story as well, told from the viewpoint of an older troop; instead of the scared youth, you get the story through the eyes of a family man doing his best to "win hearts and minds". It's not a tale of a team gone native, but of a team that adapted to their situation and won their war by depriving the enemy of weapons and men with which to kill American troops and their Afghani allies. Moreso it treats the Afghan people with respect and demonstrates that with the proper attention to differences in culture, the war in Afghanistan could have gone very differently without the needless bloodshed. This is a positive story that sheds a different light on the war in Afghanistan and proves the adage that bullets cost money, but kindness is free.

Leanna Kowallis says

I received this book from a goodreads giveaway. Thank you! This book was hard to read for me because I'm not too familiar with all the military jargon and acronyms he was using. However, I thought it was a very interesting story about one group's experience in Afghanistan.

Roger Feenstra says

The worst book on war I have read. The U.S. could have sent volunteers from the Peace Corps to do what these Green Berets did. It would have saved us millions of dollars.

Diana West says

Fry writes with veracity and humility:

His expertise in-theatre and his frank, descriptive honesty make this a textbook must! What a patriot! What an honest-to-gosh hero!

Mike says

Note: I received this free copy of Hammerhead Six: How Green Berets Waged an Unconventional War Against the Taliban to Win in Afghanistan's Deadly Pech Valley through the Goodreads Giveaway program, with the expectation that a review would follow. Here is my review:

This book gets a strong **4 Stars** as an excellent textbook on Special Forces and Unconventional Warfare and on how an SF "A"-team conducted a successful UW mission in Afghanistan's Kunar Province, Pech Valley in 2003-2004. To show how dangerous a place this was (and is), within 10 miles of Hammerhead 6's camp you will find the Korengal Valley (War), the site where Lone Survivor: The Eyewitness Account of Operation Redwing and the Lost Heroes of SEAL Team 10 took place and where the The Three Battles of Wanat: And Other True Stories were fought. Hammerhead Six established the first SF "A" Camp since the Vietnam War. What is an "A" Camp?

(view spoiler)

You will follow how the team sets up the camp and starts to become a part of the local community. This was the most interesting part of the story. This is not a story of firefights and battle, it is more comprehensive.

Civil Affairs is one way to demonstrate progress and support:

But our most significant CA project was the restoration, throughout that spring, of damaged mosques. Many of these had been riddled by Taliban or other gunfire and then, due to a lack of resources, fallen into disrepair. They were the spiritual centers for thousands in this isolated region, and their poor condition offered us both a vivid symbol of how the Taliban had distorted Islamic values and an opportunity to generate trust by restoring their dignity.

It took a little doing to convince my team that refurbishing Moslem mosques was the best use of limited resources. But once they saw the logic of the proposal, they embraced it eagerly. Scott saw its wisdom with special clarity. Reacting to the all-too-common perception among some of our countrymen that the enemy in Afghanistan was Islam itself, he saw the need to work with our Muslim neighbors and not to see all Afghans as undifferentiated hajiis.

“Islam wasn’t the problem,” he later reflected. “It was part of the terrain. Hating Islam was like being mad at a mountain or a river.”

Our adversaries had recently launched an aggressive PSYOP campaign, denouncing us as Christians attempting to a covert the valley. At first, this put village elders, wanting to support our efforts in a tough position. It took some doing to convince them that the propaganda claims—absurd on the surface to us—were false. The mosque plan helped us to set their minds at ease. It showed them that, far from trying to convert them, we were staunch respecters of their religion and customs.

Sometimes it is hard for the soldiers to understand the local culture. One punishment for failing to obey was to hold a child’s feet over a fire. The medic treats many kids for this and notices the Afghan soldiers on the camp also show these scars. But there are some positive aspects of the culture the soldiers come to understand. The main idea is that the SF team has to integrate and be accepted into the local environment to achieve the goals of the mission. There are some great vignettes where Cpt Frey has to solve problems...the “cow that wasn’t there” is very humorous. Also being offered the hand of a local shura leader’s daughter in marriage was fun. Cpt Frey is a Mormon (as are some others in the team-Utah Nat’l Guard) so the idea of multiple wives is dealt with in an interesting way.

The end of the book was very moving as Capt Frey, “the red-bearded commander”, is in a difficult position due to an accidental killing. The book also features multiple friction points between the rear echelon “planners” and the warfighters in the field. Wish this book had been published 10 years ago, it may have had an impact on the war. It is now aimed at future UW conflicts. Excellent book!

Chris says

Telling it true

This isn't a book long on firefights and midnight raids. This is a book about how a Green Beret force won over the hearts and minds of "the enemy" by understanding where they were and who they were interacting with. These gents did what Green Berets are supposed to do, and multiplied the force strength of indigenous personnel through training and diplomacy. Hats off to Hammerhead Six for not seeing a world filled with nails. I think they were onto something.

James Chally says

I give this 2.5 stars. Reading this is kind of like the story you get after you separate two kids who were fighting on the playground and you pull one of them aside to find out what happened. Everything is interpreted through his biased lens; this is probably best illustrated in the chapter 'High Noon' which he offers up as yet another example of how he undermined support for local insurgents through what I guess he classifies as psychological warfare. Anyone who has spent any time in this country will tell you this account was painfully embarrassing to read. My biggest gripe with this book, and something I frankly find inexcusable, was his assertion in the last chapter that if the Army had followed his model Afghanistan would somehow be different than the mess we are currently still in. This blissfully ignores the fact that since at least 2009 and probably before that, this exact model has been employed throughout the entire country up until the draw down in the last few years, and where are we? SOF has been doing this for almost a decade. How you can write this book in 2016 and just completely ignore that fact is utterly preposterous. In fact, just thinking about that now I'm downgrading this review to 2 stars.

Benjamin Charles says

Excellent read for all current and future SOF operators. Also provides key insight from an unconventional perspective for those who are so interested.

Susan says

I won this book through Goodreads. Wow. Really incredible group of soldiers. Beautifully written and so crazy, scary, heartwarming, inspiring. So glad to have read this.

Rich Beckwith says

Simply ...

Romans 12:20-21

20-On the contrary:

"If your enemy is hungry, feed him;

if he is thirsty, give him something to drink.

In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head."

21-Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

Atar says

Fantastic account of how Special Forces (Green Berets) did what so many others in uniform could not. To get an area of operations under control by way of kindness, appreciation, respect, and a little gunfire in

Afghanistan with only 60 Americans and 100 Afghans is monumental. It shows that fighting an unconventional war in an unconventional way works. They fought the war they were in and not the war they want. A great read!

Stlcardslca says

Absolutely great read. The author makes it enjoyable and easy to read while also teaching relevant lessons about UW and leadership in the complex operational environment of today's world.
