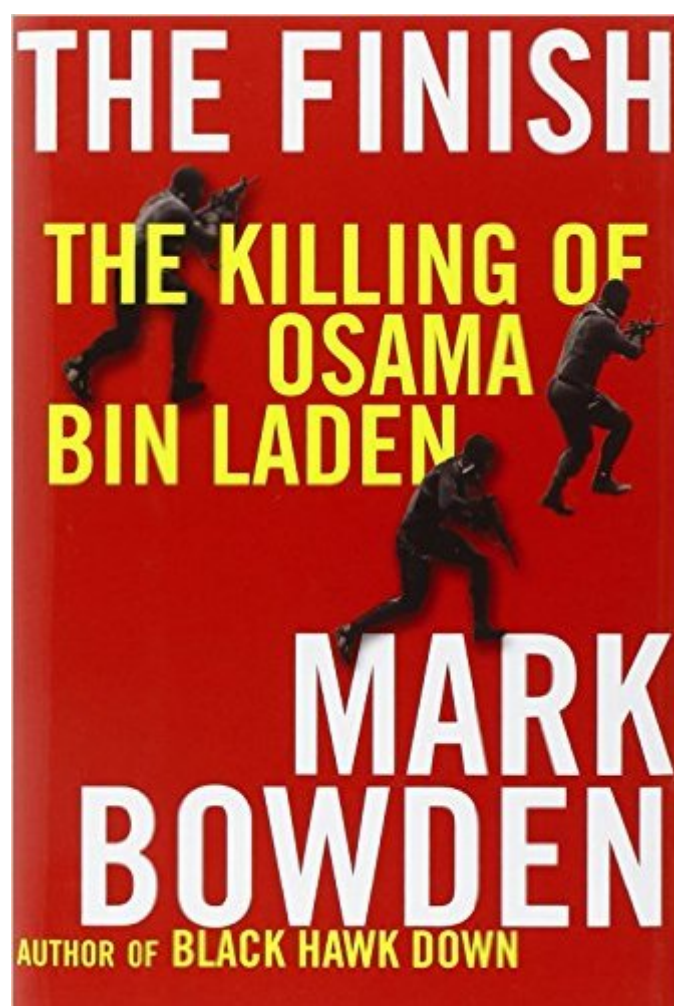


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The Finish: The Killing Of Osama Bin Laden



Synopsis

From Mark Bowden, the preeminent chronicler of our military and special forces, comes *The Finish*, a gripping account of the hunt for Osama bin Laden. With access to key sources, Bowden takes us inside the rooms where decisions were made and on the ground where the action unfolded. After masterminding the attacks of September 11, 2001, Osama bin Laden managed to vanish. Over the next ten years, as Bowden shows, America found that its war with al Qaeda—a scattered group of individuals who were almost impossible to track—demanded an innovative approach. Step by step, Bowden describes the development of a new tactical strategy to fight this war—the fusion of intel from various agencies and on-the-ground special ops. After thousands of special forces missions in Iraq and Afghanistan, the right weapon to go after bin Laden had finally evolved. By Spring 2011, intelligence pointed to a compound in Abbottabad; it was estimated that there was a 50/50 chance that Osama was there. Bowden shows how three strategies were mooted: a drone strike, a precision bombing, or an assault by Navy SEALs. In the end, the President had to make the final decision. It was time for the finish.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

When I found out that Mark Bowden, author of one of my favorite nonfiction books, *Black Hawk Down*, was writing a book on the killing of Osama Bin Laden, I immediately preordered it and read it as soon as it arrived. Bowden is a strong writer and dedicated researcher with a talent for styling nonfiction reporting in a gripping fictional style, doing for Mogadishu what Truman Capote did for

crime reporting in *In Cold Blood* and Tom Wolfe did for the Gemini astronauts in *The Right Stuff*. Unfortunately, little of that talent is on display in *The Finish*. Bowden attempts, at the beginning of each chapter of *The Finish*, to introduce a fiction-like moment involving the main players in his story. A chapter will begin with someone in a vividly described moment--Obama on the morning of 9/11, Bin Laden in hiding--and almost immediately launch into flashback. Bowden often used this technique in *Black Hawk Down*, beginning with someone in action (Sgt. Eversman lifting off in a Black Hawk opens the book) but skipping back in time to fill in the background of the bloody raid in Mogadishu, but the flashbacks in *The Finish* never lead back to anything. The narrative loops backward, exposition happens, and then the next chapter begins and the process repeats. Beyond descriptions of 9/11 and the raid on Abbottabad itself, there is little concrete action for Bowden to exploit, as he has done so well in other books, and so the majority of the book feels like background, exposition, detail we'll need for later. I'd blame it on source material and a rushed timeline. The research for *The Finish* appears to have been primarily interviews with major political figures.

There are several things wrong with this book, and they get worse as you approach the later chapters. I would have given up earlier, I only finished it so that I can write a qualified review. First of all the writing style is nothing like other Bowden work. I don't know whether there was a bunch of rushed ghostwriters at work here or what happened, but the writing style is nothing like Bowden's other works, flat and repetitive. Editing also lacks, with some sentences making no sense, referring to the wrong person, missing quotation marks etc. Speaking of repetitive, the whole book is based on very little actual information, it is just spread out in a wordy manner, and as I said the editors didn't shy away from becoming outright repetitive. Then there is the issue of what original information there is. Apart from one interview with Obama which is mentioned in several places (but not a very revealing one either) much of the information seems to come from political staffers. That is kind of OK when we are talking about CIA personnel, but much of this book is white house staff work and description of conference rooms. Sorry I don't like it. And I did like other books that had a lot of administrative detail in them, so it's not just the topic. But it mixes not well with the repetitiveness. The description of the actual raid is a huge letdown, too, since Bowden did decide to publish before he had access to anybody who was there. So in the end you learned a lot about political staffers' decision-making (such as speech preparation which is a central topic), people you never heard about before. doesn't like reviewers to compare directly to specific other titles.

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