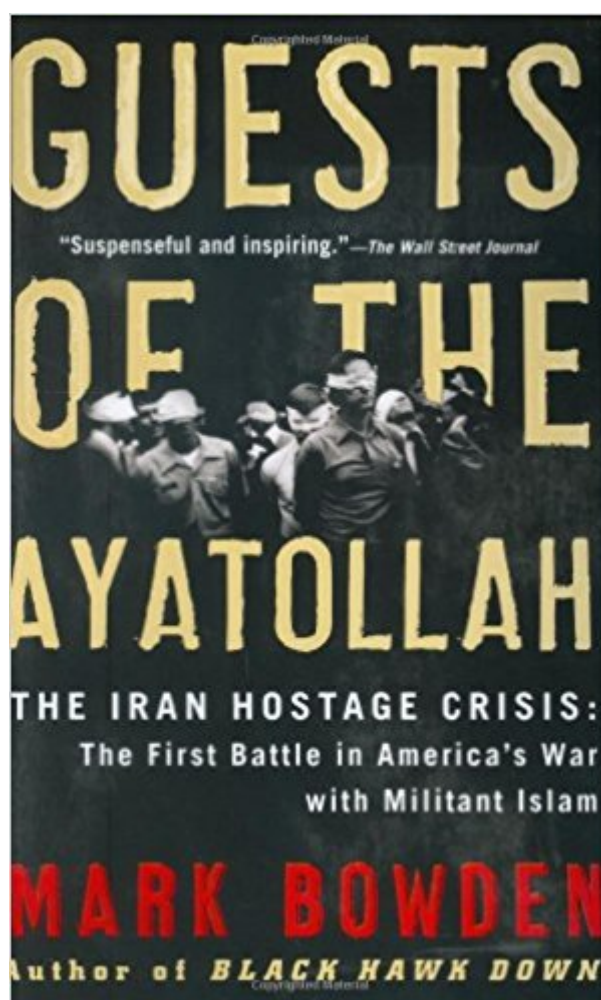


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Guests Of The Ayatollah: The Iran Hostage Crisis: The First Battle In America's War With Militant Islam



Synopsis

From the best-selling author of *Black Hawk Down* comes a riveting, definitive chronicle of the Iran hostage crisis, America's first battle with militant Islam. On November 4, 1979, a group of radical Islamist students, inspired by the revolutionary Iranian leader Ayatollah Khomeini, stormed the U.S. embassy in Tehran. They took fifty-two Americans hostage, and kept nearly all of them hostage for 444 days. In *Guests of the Ayatollah*, Mark Bowden tells this sweeping story through the eyes of the hostages, the soldiers in a new special forces unit sent to free them, their radical, naïve captors, and the diplomats working to end the crisis. Bowden takes us inside the hostages' cells and inside the Oval Office for meetings with President Carter and his exhausted team. We travel to international capitals where shadowy figures held clandestine negotiations, and to the deserts of Iran, where a courageous, desperate attempt to rescue the hostages exploded into tragic failure. Bowden dedicated five years to this research, including numerous trips to Iran and countless interviews with those involved on both sides. *Guests of the Ayatollah* is a detailed, brilliantly re-created, and suspenseful account of a crisis that gripped and ultimately changed the world.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I have read other books by Mark Bowden and he did not disappoint me with "Guests..". True to his style that made his other books so good were his ability to get a 360 degree view of the situation by getting accounts from all sides of an event. He has the ability to create stories with in the story of all the people involved on all sides and it left me wondering how he was able to make such contacts, get precise information and draw the lines he did especially in regards to a radically Islamic Iran. The

only part of the book that dragged was the day to day routine the prisoners dealt with (only a few were tortured i.e. beaten, most were just holed up, some alone for months on end and repeatedly interrogated and harrassed by uneducated fundamental "students"). The prisoners were held hostage for ever 440 days and like their monotonous time spent sitting in their rooms, the book got a little monotonous talking about it. One reason I bought the book was to hopefully learn something about the history of our two cultures and where it went wrong. Mr. Bowden's storytelling capabilities are so strong that to a point, the history lesson I was looking for was somewhat clouded by the situation he was writing about. This isn't a complaint, but I may have to re-read part of the book to find some of facts I was initially looking for. His character development was excellent, and added strength to the stories when talking about clashing personalities, prisoners harrassing the guards or doing un-Islamic things in front of the guards to embarrass them. His research on the failed Delta mission was first class (and very sad in regards to the time and energy spent along with the loss of such capable men) as was his research on Carter and his administration during the whole crisis.

Anyone who wants to understand our current stand-off with nuclear Iran simply must read this incredible book of historical journalism. Mark Bowden has captured the very essence of our ongoing, 27-year conflict with radical Islam by exposing the horrid events of 1979 - 1980 when rage-filled college students seized the U.S. embassy in Tehran. It's a triumph of professional research and sophisticated storytelling. Bowden takes us inside the U.S. embassy just as the takeover was about to be launched. In short order, we meet an incredible cast of real-life characters, from street savvy embassy staffers like Michael Metrisko to clueless government officials and over-confident radicals. As the hostage crisis unfolds, we can see how the self-righteous "joy" over the initial takeover quickly degenerated into a sad drama of suspicion, prejudice and incompetence that dragged on for 444 days - much longer than anyone really wanted, including the hostage takers themselves. To make matters even worse, the very same radicals who launched this tragic episode are now largely in control of the Iranian government. Many Americans are still clueless about the events that got us to this place. It's a bad dream that just won't go away... Both Iran and the U.S. get their fair share of criticism in this exhaustively researched book. If you're looking for an "us vs. them, good guys vs. bad guys" treatment, don't look here. Bowden properly points out our massive intelligence failures before, during AND after the initial embassy seizure. Even the aborted rescue mission seems rooted in a fantasy cloud of wishful thinking. For their part, the Islamic radicals come across as typical "true believers" who never let the facts get in the way of the "truth."

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