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Siege: Crisis Leadership & The Survival Of U.S. Embassy Kuwait



Synopsis

On August 2, 1990, Iraqi soldiers surged into Kuwait City, surrounding the American Embassy and trapping Ambassador Nathaniel Howell, the embassy staff, and a frightened contingent of American citizens inside the gates. By mid-December they were all safely home. "Siege" is the inspiring story of how they survived.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I read this several years ago and the lessons in leadership are something that need to be revisited with the turmoil we are facing today. His calmness in the face of danger saved so many; this is a must read for understanding how many of our enemies think. Brilliant man!

"Siege" is the story, as told by the American ambassador to Kuwait, of the four-month ordeal that he and his colleagues faced in staying at their posts despite Saddam Hussein's order that they leave. They were effectively isolated from the rest of the world save for the tenuous radio link they maintained with Washington, and the sporadic visits of unofficial emissaries (e.g. Jesse Jackson, as seen on the cover) and Iraqi officials. Also housed on this compound was a hastily-collected group of American and other western civilians, who were NOT free to leave--for which reason the Embassy refused to close: these civilians had been gathered in as opportunity allowed, to save their being used as human shields in Iraq's defense of the occupation of Kuwait."Siege" is also an anthropological analysis of the interactions within this de facto community, an examination of how

people come together and cooperate in the face of external threat. The physical discomforts they endured were manifold: heat, insects, monotonous diet, finite supplies. But the worst danger was the psychological toll that their uncertain situation COULD have exacted, had the Embassy staff's leadership faltered. The Ambassador is modest in his self-appraisal & generous in that of his fellows (both Embassy staff and civilian); he certainly did not ask to be besieged, but when the situation was thrust upon him he accepted on-site responsibility for all. The story, as he recounts it, makes me hope that were I ever to find myself in similar straits, that my companions and my leadership would be cut from the same cloth. Besides learning what actually happened in the Embassy compound during Desert Shield (the media afforded only short glimpses & that story was soon eclipsed by Desert Storm), I was left with a new appreciation of human versatility & spirit. My only complaint about the book is the small number of pictures; then again, they were under SIEGE, for crying out loud!

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