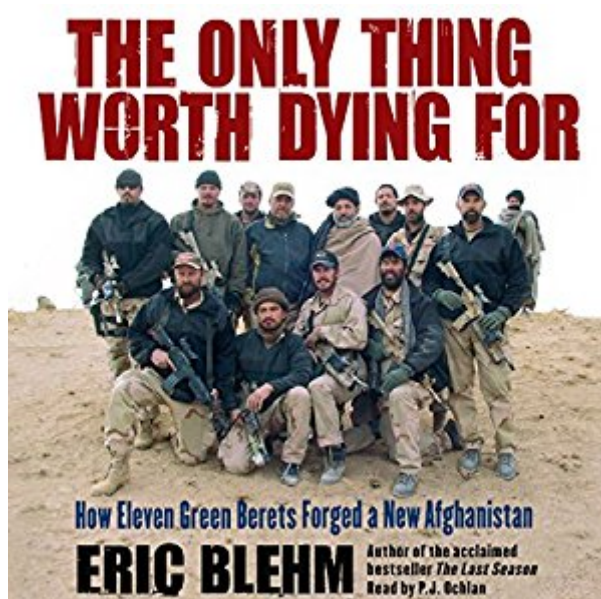


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# The Only Thing Worth Dying For: How Eleven Green Berets Forged A New Afghanistan



## Synopsis

On a moonless night just weeks after September 11, 2001, U.S. Special Forces team ODA 574 infiltrates the mountains of southern Afghanistan with a seemingly impossible mission: to foment a tribal revolt and force the Taliban to surrender. Armed solely with the equipment they can carry on their backs, shockingly scant intelligence, and their mastery of guerrilla warfare, Captain Jason Amerine and his men have no choice but to trust their only ally: a little-known Pashtun statesman named Hamid Karzai who has returned from exile and is being hunted by the Taliban as he travels the countryside raising a militia. *The Only Thing Worth Dying For* chronicles the most important mission in the early days of the Global War on Terror, when the men on the ground knew little about the enemy - and their commanders in Washington knew even less. With unprecedented access to surviving members of ODA 574, key war planners, and Karzai himself, award-winning author Eric Blehm cuts through the noise of politicians and high-level military officials to narrate, for the first time, a story of uncommon bravery and terrible sacrifice, intimately exposing the realities of unconventional warfare and nation-building in Afghanistan that continue to shape the region today.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Very well written without the Hollywood embellishments many authors resort to. Many great things are accomplished by small groups of military personnel like these Green Berets and what they accomplished needs to be appreciated. What happened to them was a tragedy that seems to happen in each conflict, people in the rear who should not be involved in the minute tactical

decisions costing brave men their lives. Five stars for the brave men and the great job this author did,

Being former Army (Intel) and an ex-fiancee of a Green Beret, I've always been fascinated by Special Forces. This book is well-written and represents Green Berets very much as I remember them (short of being one myself). It also represents the military and all its red tape and esprit de corp accurately. Quite the read that I sped through in two days. It's written as third-person omniscient, not my favorite POV, but it works perfectly for this story and I barely noticed it flowed so well. I don't think it could've been written any other way and still kept the flow and tension and realism. I highly, highly recommend this book for lovers of military biographies and histories.

A good book, that once again lets the reader get acquainted with some of the most courageous defenders of this country. Each member of the proud Green Berets showed how harsh and dangerous were the obstacles they faced. To say that I am so proud of these courageous individuals is putting it mildly. I actually revere their lives, for I recognize that without their kind, this country wouldn't be half the country that it is. Their strength, and their standing up against all forces that mean harm, make them a unique breed. I like the book on principle alone, not as much, perhaps, as some other titles, but it is such a privilege to read how they all work together, including aerial support, and how these eleven men defied the odds in their battle for the greater good. 4 Stars.

Blehm's book is a true account of a U.S. special forces unit sent to Afghanistan in the fall of 2001, following 9/11. The unit of green berets, ODA 574, led by captain Jason Amerine is airlifted with helicopters to southern Afghanistan with Hamid Karzai, with the aim to train guerrilla forces of local Pashtuns, loyal to Karzai to wage war against the Taliban, still strong in the southern provinces. Things develop faster than anticipated and the unit finds itself fighting alongside locals to take over towns soon after their landing. Working closely with Hamid Karzai the group and Pashtun leader learn to respect each other. Against special operations doctrine, headquarters soon send more senior officers on site to "support" Amerine's and Karzai's efforts to oust the Taliban. Tensions soon develop between ODA 574 and the newcomers, when superior officers start to mingle in the day to day operations. ODA 574's tour in Afghanistan ends in tragedy. The book is well written and Blehm has managed to keep it interesting on two levels. On one hand, The Only Thing Worth Dying For is a traditional war hero story, packed with adrenalin filled descriptions of firefights and cool

military technology. Reading about a massive air operation against a hundred Taliban trucks threatening to overrun the unit's and their guerillas' positions, kept me glued to the book. It also gives a look into the politics inside the military. However, the book has another background story; that of Hamid Karzai and the political situation in Afghanistan. Karzai in 2001 was just one Pashtun leader among many warlords, unknown internationally. Blehm's book sets the stage for Karzai's ascent to spokesman of the interim government in Afghanistan, and ultimately presidency of the country, his current position. The author gives an exceedingly positive picture of the Pashtun leader (as does Rashid), who has come under heavy criticism in recent years. In these uncertain early months of the Afghan-American offensive against the Taliban, Karzai is portrayed as the only possible leader for the whole country. Blehm's writing style is quite light and despite being documentary, the book relies much on dialogue. There must be quite a lot of the author's influence in the story, but it makes this shortish book immensely readable. If you like books filled with machismo and modern warfare action and want to learn something about recent Afghan history at the same time, I can recommend this one!

Books like Eric Blehm's "The Only Thing Worth Dying For" should be required reading for anyone wanting to talk about the war in Afghanistan - not just because it's well-written (which it is), but because of the insight it offers into the pre- and immediately post-9/11 landscape of Afghanistan and the American warfighters who accomplished so much in those early days. The Green Berets chronicled here manage to set up a successful rebellion against the Taliban in their own backyard (so to speak) and how they do it speaks volumes about these men's abilities. One can't help but feel that if Special Forces ODA's like the one in this wonderful account were in charge of every war we fought, we'd be much more effective both at war and in the peace that follows. Still, the team's sudden end to their mission highlights just how little control we have when it comes to combat. If you want to know what elite warfighters have to go through to accomplish the mission; or want to see why certain "big-picture" decisions were made before the perfection of hind-sight; or you just want to read a really well-written account of incredible men fighting an unconventional war, then pick up "The Only Thing Worth Dying For."

Coupled with "First In" and "Jawbreaker", these three books tell the story of the first U.S. Special Forces/CIA/Delta operators on the ground in Afghanistan after 9-11-01. This is the real story, sourced and told by the actual men involved. All three books leave an indelible imprint and perspective on one's mind that the so-called News Media doesn't even come close to, let alone

understand. These are the brave-hearts of today, and I for one stand in awe of them all. Great Great Stuff ! PLUS, "The Only Thing Worth Dying For" provides a down-to-earth look and enlightening perspective of the man, Hamid Karzai. Wonderfully written, thoroughly and brilliantly sourced; it is a testament to all of the men of ODA 574, the Afghan's who fought with them, Hamid Karzai, and Eric Blehm, for his superb authorship. Thank You, Monty Lee Malden - a proud American

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