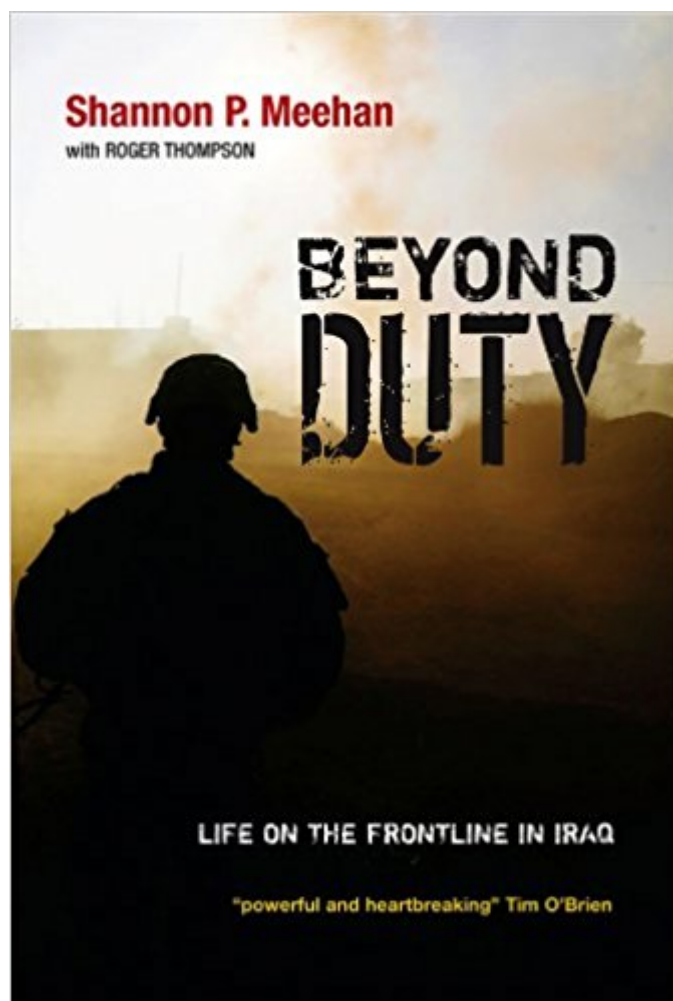


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# Beyond Duty: Life On The Frontline In Iraq



## Synopsis

Under the blazing Iraqi sun in the summer of 2007, Shannon Meehan, a lieutenant in the U.S. Army, ordered a strike that would take the lives of innocent Iraqi civilians. He thought he was doing the right thing. He thought he was protecting his men. He thought that he would only kill the enemy, but in the ruins of the strike, he discovers his mistake and uncovers a tragedy. For most of his deployment in Iraq, Lt. Meehan felt that he had been made for a life in the military. A tank commander, he worked in the violent Diyala Province, successfully fighting the insurgency by various Sunni and Shia factions. He was celebrated by his senior officers and decorated with medals. But when the U.S. surge to retake Iraq in 2006 and 2007 finally pushed into Baqubah, a town virtually entirely controlled by al Qaida, Meehan would make the decision that would change his life. This is the true story of one soldier's attempt to reconcile what he has done with what he felt he had to do. Stark and devastating, it recounts first-hand the reality of a new type of warfare that remains largely unspoken and forgotten on the frontlines of Iraq.

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## Customer Reviews

"An articulate and devastating memoir." Military Writers Society of America "The book resonates because Meehan speaks not for sympathy but for understanding, and because - sadly - his personal story is one the other service members know well." Army Times "Highly recommended ... This work serves as a reminder of some of the costs of war in modern times and leaves readers 'dazed and confused' over how to respond and what to think about the situation in Iraq." Central

European Journal of International and Security Studies "An exceptional book. It takes the reader to Iraq, to feel all sides of a deployed soldier's life, from the boredom, the bullshit to the battles and the searing heat inside the tank. This is a book that every American should read in order to get a full accounting of what it means to send men and women off to war. You may finish, but you won't forget *Beyond Duty*. I can't recommend this one highly enough." Pundit Review "A straightforward, succinct and insightful report of one man's experience at war ... The book resonates because Meehan speaks not for sympathy, but for understanding, and because - sadly - his personal story is one that other service members know well." *Air Force Times* "Beyond Duty is a powerful and heartbreaking account of Lieutenant Shannon Meehan's tour of duty in Iraq, and of his decision in 2007 to call in a missile strike that claimed the lives of innocent civilians. Remorse, shame, self-doubt, depression - these were among the war's emotional aftershocks for Lieutenant Meehan. This honest and painfully intense narrative is a reminder of the terrible costs of warfare, not just as measured by blood or treasure, but also in terms of damage to the human psyche. I will return to this book often." Tim O'Brien, author of *The Things They Carried* and winner of the National Book Award "This memoir is a descent into war's difficult terrain, a landscape which continues on within the veteran as he or she returns home. The archetype of the classic hero is nearly completely destroyed through the personal narrative which chronicles a series of harrowing events in order to reveal a deeper sense of the heroic. Meehan's voice reminds us that the bleeding continues on after the guns have gone silent, even if we don't realize it." Brian Turner, award-winning author of *Here, Bullet*, and veteran of the Iraq War "Meehan explores the complicated anxieties of battle and command with precision and intelligence. He treats colossally horrific situations with admirable emotional restraint, and his strong, taut narrative has a visceral impact. This is a book that ranks among the very best writing that is being done today about events on the frontline in Iraq." James Hutchisson, *The Citadel*, The Military College of South Carolina "For better or for worse, this memoir documents what the war in Iraq has been: young soldiers doing their heartbreaking best to do the right thing amid confusion, chaos and collateral damage." Mary Russell, award-winning author of *A Thread of Grace* and *The Sparrow*

Under the blazing Iraqi sun in the summer of 2007, Shannon Meehan, a lieutenant in the U.S. Army, ordered a strike that would take the lives of innocent Iraqi civilians. He thought he was doing the right thing. He thought he was protecting his men. He thought that he would only kill the enemy, but in the ruins of the strike, he discovers his mistake and uncovers a tragedy. For most of his deployment in Iraq, Lt. Meehan felt that he had been made for a life in the military. A tank

commander, he worked in the violent Diyala Province, successfully fighting the insurgency by various Sunni and Shia factions. He was celebrated by his senior officers and decorated with medals. But when the U.S. surge to retake Iraq in 2006 and 2007 finally pushed into Baqubah, a town virtually entirely controlled by al Qaida, Meehan would make the decision that would change his life. This is the true story of one soldier's attempt to reconcile what he has done with what he felt he had to do. Stark and devastating, it recounts first-hand the reality of a new type of warfare that remains largely unspoken and forgotten on the frontlines of Iraq. --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

Beyond Duty by Shannon P. Meehan is an intense firsthand experience on the life of an American soldier and I would highly recommend it. Beyond Duty goes in to depth and detail on the life of Shannon Meehan before he was a soldier and while he was a soldier. Meehan who was a star high school athlete and college graduate signs up to join the military. Meehan describes his experiences throughout the Iraqi war. While some of his experiences are more gruesome than others he keeps you attached and wanting to read more. At some points in the book I thought to myself how can this be real, and how do soldiers like Meehan make the decisions that they make. It must be extremely difficult to see what these soldiers see, and do what they do. That's why Beyond Duty is so unique. It allows for civilians to understand the life of an American soldier and gives us the chance to get a glimpse of their everyday life. Beyond Duty keeps you on your toes throughout the whole book with the descriptive and gruesome experiences faced by Meehan and his fellow soldiers. It's the type of book that you just can't put down and are forced to stop reading in disbelief at some of the things Meehan and his soldiers have experienced. Beyond Duty is the type of book that encompasses all your emotions. There were many sections throughout the book where I was sad, mad, relieved, and speechless. Meehan was put in times of terror when he was in midst of a full out gun fight, and he was put in times of sadness when he was forced to see his fellow brothers injured. Meehan describes these experiences in vivid detail and leaves nothing unsaid. What's also great about Beyond Duty is that it's not just your typical action war book. Meehan talks about so much more than just his experiences in battle. He describes his emotions and his beliefs. He goes into thought about every decision he makes and everything he is forced to see. From there he sort of breaks everything down and embraces his inner self and the feelings he has over what he's doing and why he's doing it. After reading Beyond Duty I truly feel as if I personally connected with Meehan, and it's given me a whole new outlook on being a soldier and the hardships that come with it. Overall I would highly recommend

this book if you find the military interesting, and aren't only interested about the action aspect of war but also the emotions and thought behind the everyday life of a soldier, parent, and husband.

When I was assigned this novel, I wasn't particularly excited. Having read a lot of novels about war, I didn't think that *Beyond Duty* would be different than the rest. That thought changed when I finished the prologue. Shannon Meehan captures the reader with just the first pages and he hooks you to his story, wanting to know what happened in this war. When he tells us that he killed a bunch of innocent kids, everyone's first reaction is to turn the page and keep on reading about what happened next. Instead, we are greeted by the beginning of his story, how he got to Iraq and most importantly why. Meehan then takes us down the road of his experience down the war. It is really astounding because one as a reader can really see how each significant event is changing Meehan. What really interested me was how his writing changed in the means of how he wrote about future missions. He was becoming more strong and fierce as the novel goes on and this shows how war changes you. This novel is really good and, in my opinion, very different than other novels about war because it does not tell you how and why the soldier changes throughout the war. This novel shows you through Meehan's writing how he is changing and why he is changing. Also, war stories are never boring but this particular story will keep everyone on their toes trying to find out what will happen and how will this affect our characters. I really enjoyed reading this novel and I recommend it to anyone who wants a good war novel because this one will not disappoint. It has enough detail to make it extremely interesting but not too much detailed up to the point where it is too exhausting. I would have liked a little bit more dialogue but this is someone's story so of course we get more from his point of view than conversations. It impresses me how we can see the character changing during the novel and one thing that really caught my attention is when he writes a letter to Rosie O'Donnell after she criticizes the soldiers in Iraq. His anger and lashing out shows how much he has changed and how he has changed. His idea about war has intensified and he believes much more strongly that fighting this war is the right thing to do. Like many other soldiers, he is becoming more angry and resentful towards everyone else and I feel that Meehan is aware of that change and even though he does not like it, there is not much he can do about it because he cannot stop from changing. The whole story is sort of a buildup to, what I think, is what changed him the most. His actions led to a terrible mistake and I think that it's the reason to why he wrote this book. The ending is really good and readers will not be disappointed. This novel is really well written and well told. It is not boring and yet it does not seem too far-fetched.

Beyond duty is one of the best books I have ever read, once you start reading its hard to stop. This book in particular portrays the Iraq war and gives the reader an understanding to what the soldiers and the people go through, The emotions you get will reading this book, is what makes this book special. The content are stunning, shocking, and un expected, which grabs the readers interest chapter by chapter. Unlike other books about the war in Iraq, this book gives an insight and the harsh reality of this war. Lieutenant Meehan's experience that was reflected in this book, makes the reader relates emotionally with his story. Furthermore , the burden that comes with being captain is great. Personally , I would not to be put in a position like that , were my soldiers life depended on my decisions as a leader. This book made me realize, that leaders such as LT Meehan are affected psychologically when attaining a leading position. Almost every decision revolves around a life or death situation, exerting a lot of pressure on Meehan. Though , he keeps his composure for the sake of his men , which shocked me greatly given the experience he went through. Finally, this book is an eye opener to the harsh reality in such wars . Emotions and hardship the soldiers go through, that no on would understand unless faced by it . This story must make the general public appreciate the life they have, and that they did not face the devastating reality of war. I highly recommend this book, since it would change the way you view our soldiers , knowing what they really go through . Not just physically but emotionally to, and this book is the perfect bridge to understand their hardship. Once again this book will change your perspective about the war , get ready for the ride through the life of Lieutenant Meehan.

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