

The Quiet Professional: Major Richard J. Meadows of the U.S. Army Special Forces
by Alan Hoe with a foreword by General Peter J. Schoomaker, USA (RET.)
The University Press of Kentucky, 2011.

It was the Iran Embassy Siege of 1980, followed by the Falklands War of 1982, which catapulted the SAS to the forefront of British consciousness, and the first Gulf War of 1990-91 that launched a 'special forces' genre of popular fiction whose popularity shows no sign of waning.

As in life in general, however, fact is often much more extraordinary than fiction because it is about real life situations over which individuals have no control but which they must overcome to survive.

Richard J. Meadows, who died of leukaemia in 1995, had a tough start in life with an abusive father, and it was the US Army, who's iconic Delta Force he played a key role in founding, that was to prove his salvation. Meadows brought to his military career, which he started as an NCO and ended as a much decorated major, an acute eye for tactics and planning, and a near-genius for leadership that made him nothing less than an iconic figure.

After outstanding service in Korea, and later in Vietnam, during which he led the heroic (though ultimately unsuccessful) raid on the Son Tay compound near Hanoi to rescue some US POWs, Meadows retired in 1977, only to help establish the Delta Force. He played an instrumental and hugely courageous part in the (again, ultimately unsuccessful) attempt to free the US Embassy hostages in Tehran and ended his career in South America providing security services to local industries.

The Quiet Professional is written by an SAS veteran, a colleague and great friend of Meadows, and is interspersed with Meadows' own words. His death, in comparison with his life, was quiet, but he went on what he dubbed 'the last patrol' with dignity, assured of a lasting place in US military history.

This is a powerful book that engages the reader from the first page and presents a hugely positive image of a man who truly deserves the accolade of 'hero'.

Rabbi Dr Charles H Middleburgh