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Chasing Ghosts: A Soldier's Fight for America from Baghdad to Washington

Paul Rieckhoff

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As a First Lieutenant and Infantry Platoon Leader for the U.S. Army National Guard charged with leading thirty-eight men in Iraq, Paul Rieckhoff followed in the footsteps of his father and grandfather. After Rieckhoff volunteered to take part in the invasion of Iraq, he and his soldiers spent almost a year in one of the most dangerous and volatile areas of Baghdad, where they struggled to maintain order, protect Iraqi civilians, track down insurgents, and defend themselves against sniper and roadside bomb attacks.

But it was clear to Rieckhoff almost from the get-go that America's mission in Iraq was deeply flawed - and that his platoon was overchallenged and underequipped. If there was a plan to stabilize Baghdad after the invasion, no one had let them in on it. And with so many obstacles to overcome, they faced enemies that included thousands of armed, angry, and unemployed men who had been unleashed into the streets when the U.S. government disbanded the Iraqi army.

The way that Rieckhoff responded to these and other challenges over the next ten months set him on a course that would forever change his life. And when Rieckhoff finally came home, he vowed to tell Americans the truth, however controversial, about what was going on in Iraq. He publicly demanded accountability from elected officials, created the first organization specifically for veterans of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and took the new fight to the airwaves and the halls of power in Washington.

For anyone who wonders what alternatives there are in Iraq to either "staying the course" or "cutting-and-running," *Chasing Ghosts* is an uncensored and unrehearsed statement from a war veteran, providing a candid grunt's-eye view of the harrowing, bloody battles on the streets of Baghdad-and a patriot's vision of where America has gone wrong and how it can reset its path.

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