



Target Basra

Mike Rossiter

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In the dead of night on 20 March 2003, Royal Navy Marines from 40 and 42 Commando board a fleet of twenty helicopters. With faces blackened and mouths dry at the thought of what lies ahead, they have been given the job of capturing the oil pipelines and pumping stations through which 90 per cent of Iraq's oil is exported, to seal off the whole of the Faw peninsula and hold it against any counter-attack by the Iraqi Army. They will be the first troops on the ground in Iraq, literally kicking the door down. They will also suffer the first allied casualties in the war to overthrow Saddam Hussein.

Operation Telic was a bold and audacious break with military doctrine, a night-time airborne assault against heavily defended positions.

With the Commandos lightly armed and isolated, the night-time landing was just the beginning. They were engaged in a series of fast-moving and hard-fought battles as they moved rapidly north until they reached the outskirts of Basra.

Finally, after a two-day battle that broke the back of the Iraqi resistance, and eighteen days after their first contact with the enemy, Royal Marine Commandos entered the presidential palace in Basra.

Told from the perspective, and with the cooperation of officers and men in the Royal Navy and the Royal Marines, *Target Basra* is a story of courage, fortitude and the harsh realities of modern war, fought in the context of the turmoil of the Middle East.

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