



Ghost Recon (Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon, Book 1)

By David Michaels, Tom Clancy



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The U.S. Army's Special Forces are known for their highly specialized training and courage behind enemy lines. But there's a group that's even more stealthy and deadly. It's comprised of the most feared operators on the face of the earth—the soldiers of Ghost Recon.



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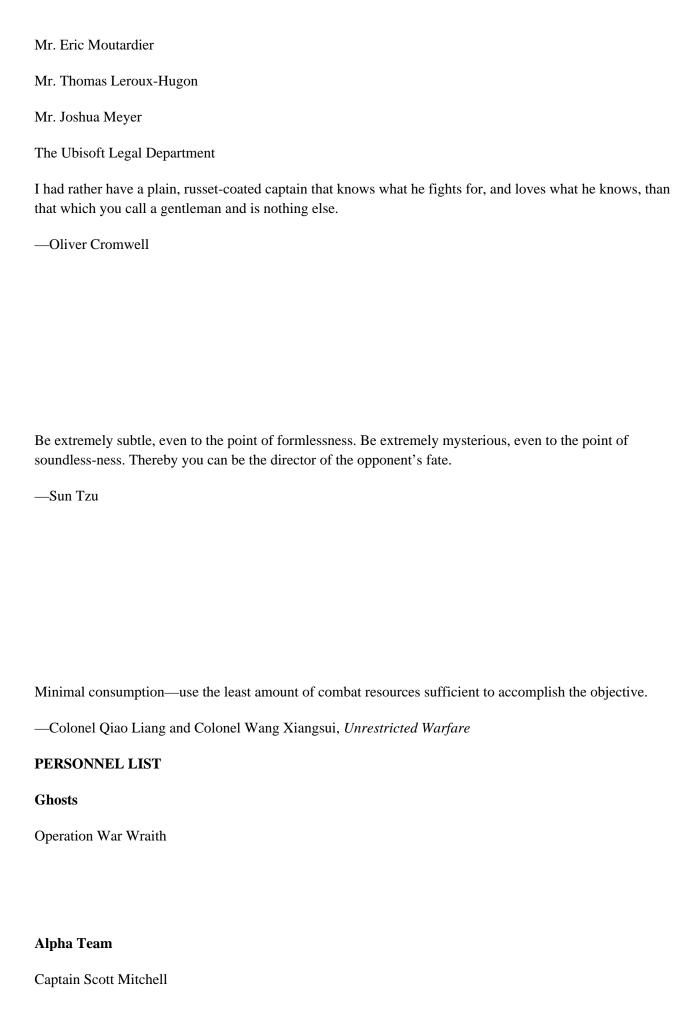
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ONE

BASILAN ISLAND SULU ARCHIPELAGO, SOUTHERN PHILIPPINES AUGUST, 2002

Master Sergeant Scott Mitchell blinked at the sweat in his eyes and pushed on through the rubber plants, their leathery leaves brushing against his boonie hat and cheek. Ahead lay a slight clearing in the otherwise dense, twilit jungle, and Mitchell used his M4A1's barrel to lift a thin branch as he hunkered down at the edge.

Captain Victor Foyte, his detachment commander, moved ahead beside an uneven stretch of wilting palm fronds still dripping from a storm that had rolled in several hours ago. "Ricochet, this is Road Warrior 06," the captain whispered into his radio. "Think I see something. And I hear some buzzing, like flies. Let's check it out, over."

"Right with you, Boss," answered Mitchell.

Although Foyte outranked him, Mitchell was the team sergeant, responsible for fighting all twelve members

of Operational Detachment Alpha (ODA) 574. The captain and warrant officer coordinated with the twelve-man Filipino and Taiwanese teams they'd been cross-training with for the past two weeks.

Mitchell started forward as up to his right a snake coiled around an overhanging limb, its tongue fluttering. Special Forces operators ate bad guys for breakfast and snakes for supper; consequently, they weren't unnerved by either. Nevertheless, Mitchell grimaced and got out of there to join the captain.

Barely three steps later, a whoosh of musty air, a rustle of leaves, and the sharp crack of a rope sent lightning bolts through his gut. He looked up and gasped.

The captain had been moving toward a pole stuck in the ground. Atop that pole was a human head with long, brown hair flowing around it.

A twenty-one-year-old American missionary had recently been captured by Abu Sayyaf, the local pseudo-Islamist terrorist group affiliated with al Qaeda. Military and police forces had been combing the island, looking for her and for Abu Sayyaf's stronghold, hidden somewhere deep in the mountainous interior.

It seemed the captain had found the missing woman—and much more. A rope had snapped taut around one of his ankles, and now he was being hurled three meters into the air, screaming, "Ambush!"

Mitchell was about to get on the radio when the captain swung forward, a human pendulum heading straight for a tree impaled by rows of razor-sharp *punji* stakes now revealed as fronds strung up by more ropes fell away—all part of the carefully designed booby trap.

Captain Victor Foyte was only twenty-four years old, and in the next breath he slammed back-first into the *punji* stakes, the foot-long pieces of sharpened wood driving into his arms, neck, and torso.

The team had been operating light, forgoing body armor in the rainy, hundred-plus-degree jungle. Foyte shrieked and gurgled as the stakes grew slick with his blood.

Chief Warrant Officer 02 James Alvarado, who'd been positioned about a dozen meters behind them, burst forward crying, "Captain!" Alvarado cut loose multiple rounds below the tree where Foyte now hung, inverted and bleeding to death.

Again, Mitchell keyed his mike, ready to issue orders, but Alvarado's gunfire cut him off.

This was Mitchell's first live mission as a Special Forces operator. He was an experienced infantryman and team leader from an Opposing Force (OPFOR) recon unit at Fort Irwin. He already had an impressive résumé and was hoping to make a name for himself in the Special Forces community—yet in a flash, he'd already lost his first CO.

A strange thumping noise sounded as Alvarado ceased fire and advanced into the clearing. The warrant suddenly clutched his neck, where a tiny dart extended from between his fingers. He screamed as he tugged it out.

Mitchell dropped onto his gut as more thumping sounded behind them. Alvarado wobbled forward then crumpled to the ground, poisoned and probably dead.

The team was, it seemed, being attacked by loinclothed savages whose traps and blowguns had ironically overpowered the men with their thunder sticks.

"Mitchell?" called the captain, his voice burred by the agony, his face now drenched in blood. "Mitch . . .

Unable to stare at Foyte any longer, Mitchell finally got on the radio. "This is Ricochet. Ambush! Ambush! The captain and warrant are down!"

Before he could continue, the terrorists somewhere out there, crouching in the wet foliage, revealed they were not the loinclothed savages of Mitchell's imagination but were, in fact, ruthless and modern killers.

So much automatic weapons fire blasted through the clearing that it sounded as though a thousand men with machetes were cutting apart the trees and fronds. Rounds from AK-47s and machine guns popped and boomed, wood splintered, and birds squawked and flew off as holes appeared in the leaves, the debris tumbling down on Mitchell as he rose to his elbows and spied his first pair of muzzle flashes.

At the same time, voices erupted over the radio:

"Ricochet, this is Rumblefish," called the team's weapons sergeant, Jim Idaho. "We're taking fire from both flanks! Can't get any shots from here! Need orders!"

"Ricochet, this is Red Cross. Got two men down," reported Lance Munson, the team's senior medic. "I need to evac these guys now!"

"Ricochet, I think we got incoming mortar—"

That last voice belonged to Rapper, one of the team's engineers, who was cut off as a flash lit up the jungle just northeast of Mitchell's position. A second later, the ground trembled, and a powerful explosion boomed across the landscape as showers of shrappel and debris needled through the zone.

These terrorists were reckless, stupid, or insane, perhaps all three. They were laying down mortar fire on their own position. They didn't care how many of their own they took out, so long as they killed the Americans.

Willing himself not to panic, reminding himself of who he was and the countless hours of training he had gone through, Master Sergeant Scott Mitchell, twenty-six, took command of the ODA team. "This is Ricochet! Listen up! Rumblefish? You and the rest of Bravo Team get to those wounded men and fall back south to our first waypoint. Rutang, Rockstar, and Rino, regroup on me. Move out!"

The team had been operating as two six-man units: Alpha and Bravo, with all radio call signs beginning with the letter *R*. Mitchell would exploit their division in order to provide cover for evacuating the wounded.

Another whistle rose in the night, this time closer, and suddenly the next mortar exploded, gray smoke and more shrapnel hurtling up through the canopy.

"Ricochet, this is Rutang," called the team's assistant medical sergeant, Thomas "Rutang" McDaniel. "Me and Rockstar are good to go, but Rino is gone, man. Hit by that last mortar. No pulse!"

There wasn't time to tally up the dead. All Mitchell knew was that he needed support—ground, air, anything—and he needed it now. He acknowledged Rutang's call, then switched frequencies, calling up Captain Fang Zhi's Taiwanese team. They were much closer than the Filipino team and were working the grid on the other side of the creek. "Wushu 06, this is Ricochet, over."

He waited, listened to the sound of his own breathing, the withering gunfire booming somewhere nearby, the shrill hiss of yet another mortar round, falling, falling . . .

"Wushu 06, this is Ricochet, over."

Mitchell switched frequencies once more to call upon the Filipino Team. "Black Tiger 06, this is Ricochet, over."

Boom! That distant mortar finally detonated.

"Ricochet, this is Black Tiger 06. I've heard what's happening. We're moving to your location, but we're still pretty far. ETA about twenty minutes, over."

"Roger that, Black Tiger. I have a lot of men down. Need you ASAP." Mitchell fed the captain his current GPS coordinates, then added, "Don't be late."

"We are running, Sergeant."

"Good! Ricochet, out."

Captain Gilberto Yano, aka Black Tiger 06, was a member of the Philippine Army's elite Light Reaction Battalion (LRB), the Delta Force of their army and specifically trained in counterterrorist activities. Yano was well-liked by his men and the rest of Mitchell's team. Knowing Yano and his boys were already on the way felt good, but it was going to be the longest twenty minutes of Mitchell's life.

And quite possibly the last.

Again, where the hell was Captain Fang Zhi? Mitchell called once more. No answer. Was he back in one of the nepa huts, smoking a cigar, while men died out here in the jungle?

Rutang and Rockstar hustled up and dropped down beside Mitchell.

Rutang was a baby-faced assistant medic and competitive video game player. He'd even entered and won several national tournaments, though he rarely bragged and was, for the most, curiously insecure about himself and his skills.

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