Command refused to commit the forces required to achieve total victory in Afghanistan. Instead, they delegated responsibility for fighting the wars biggest battle—one that could have broken Al Qaeda and captured Osama bin Laden—to a hodge-podge of units thrown together at the last moment.

At dawn on March 2, 2002, Americas first major battle of the 21st century began. Over 200 soldiers of the 101st Airborne and 10th Mountain Divisions flew into Afghanistans Shahikot valley—and into the mouth of a buzz saw. They were about to pay a bloody price for strategic, higher-level miscalculations that underestimated the enemys strength and willingness to fight.

Now, award-winning journalist Sean Naylor, an eyewitness to the battle, details the failures of military intelligence and planning, and vividly portrays the astonishing heroism of these young, untested U.S. soldiers. Denied the extra infantry, artillery, and attack helicopters with which they trained to go to war, these troops nevertheless proved their worth in brutal combat and—along with the exceptional daring of a small team of U.S. commandos—prevented an American military disaster.

My Personal Review:
Not a Good Day to Die is a must read for anyone who wants to understand what we should really be focusing on to change in our current military if we want to stay relevant in a future that will almost certainly be marked by uncertainty. I am a Reserve Officer who just returned from Iraq and I couldnt believe how many of the lessons I had highlighted in Naylors book,
were still relevant on the ground in Iraq. My son sent me a blog from an unknown author who I would love to thank because he sums up what I believe to be the seminal lesson from Not a Good Day to Die, and the key point we should focus on to improve our military in the future.

A brief discussion about the decisionmaking structure of U.S. land forces. The most remarkable examination of this topic is Sean Naylors recent book on Operation Anaconda, an American effort in 2002 to trap and destroy a force of hundreds of al Qaeda warriors in a valley in Afghanistan. Naylors book, Not a Good Day to Die, is far too detailed to come close to summarizing here. But two themes reappear throughout Naylors narrative.

First, the American military has grown higher headquarters like weeds in rich soil. Meetings over Operation Anaconda, a single operation planned for three days and thought to be aimed against 200 enemy, involved absurd numbers of competing organizations -- and, therefore, competing operational styles and agendas. Heres a typical laundry list for a single meeting: Representatives from K-Bar, the CIA, Task Force 11, CFLCC, the Coalition and Joint Civil-Military Operations Task Force, and Task Force Rakkanas had been invited. And this list is hardly a complete reflection of all the different headquarters involved in Anaconda. As Naylor summarizes: For a battle that would involve perhaps 2,000 allied troops -- less than a brigades worth -- in combat, CENTCOM had cobbled together a force that drew elements from eight countries, two U.S. Army divisions, two Special Forces groups, a hodgepodge of aviation units, and a variety of clandestine organizations. Each piece of that stew had its own leadership, with its own agenda and intent. A critical American military effort had become wildly and pointlessly complicated. Four-star generals reviewed plans down to the platoon level.

Second, the coordination of those many different elements and agendas meant that painfully negotiated plans became locked into place simply because they were painfully negotiated. After members of a Delta Force team pulled off the seemingly impossible feat of walking up the side of a mountain in the Afghan winter to get a firsthand look at the valley, operation leaders received reports that there were somewhere around 1000 enemy, not the 200 the American plans had called for -- and then they learned further that the enemy was not in the valley, where the plans put them, but were instead on the high ground around it. Leaders of the battle decided to go ahead with the plan as written, reluctant to throw out weeks of hard-fought staff work on the word of Lt. Col. Peter Blabers Delta operators. The plans trumped reality, because the plans had come with political and institutional costs.

Finally, one of the ways that Army officers managed the problem of ignoring the Delta Force intelligence showing 1000 enemy on the high ground was to regard the special operators who delivered that intelligence as out-of-control and untrustworthy. Leaders ridiculed the Delta team reports, and mocked the independent role that Blaber had carved out by
calling him Peter the Great and Colonel Kurtz. The enforcement of institutional orthodoxy allowed leaders to ignore realistic bad news. Todays U.S. Army in a nutshell, right there.

Theres much more to Naylors book, which is so far one of the very few critical pieces of insight into the current American wars. (The battle, by the way, went poorly.)

To summarize, then -- sorry about that -- a too-hierarchical, too-orthodox U.S. Army, and U.S. military in general, leans heavily on lumbering equipment, high technology, and major ground offensives against an enemy that relies on tactics that are often not even conventionally military in nature; we mass artillery against threatening letters and infrastructure sabotage. In equipment, doctrine, tactics, and leadership structure, were organized for the wrong enemy, in ways that cant be easily or quickly changed.

For More 5 Star Customer Reviews and Lowest Price:
Not a Good Day to Die: The Untold Story of Operation Anaconda by Sean Naylor - 5 Star Customer Reviews and Lowest Price!