Rogue Forces by Dale Brown

The clash of civilizations will be won . . . by the highest bidder

What happens when America's most lethal military contractor becomes uncontrollably powerful?

His election promised a new day for America . . . but dangerous storm clouds are on the horizon. The newly inaugurated president, Joseph Gardner, pledged to start pulling U.S. forces out of Iraq on his first day in office—no questions asked. Meanwhile, former president Kevin Martindale and retired Air Force lieutenant-general Patrick McLanahan have left government behind for the lucrative world of military contracting. Their private firm, Scion Aviation International, has been hired by the Pentagon to take over aerial patrols in northern Iraq as the U.S. military begins to downsize its presence there.

Yet Iraq quickly reemerges as a hot zone: Kurdish nationalist attacks have led the Republic of Turkey to invade northern Iraq. The new American president needs to regain control of the situation—immediately—but he's reluctant to send U.S. forces back into harms way, leaving Scion the only credible force in the region capable of blunting the Turks advances.

But when Patrick McLanahan makes the decision to take the fight to the Turks, can the president rein him in? And just where does McLanahan's loyalty ultimately lie: with his country, his commander in chief, his fellow warriors . . . or with his company's shareholders?

In Rogue Forces, Dale Brown, the New York Times bestselling master of thrilling action, explores the frightening possibility that the corporations we now rely on to fight our battles are becoming too powerful for America's good.
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My Personal Review:
I’ve prefaced my reviews of Dale Browns last three thrillers (including this one) with a reminder that Brown is a remarkably inconsistent author. His last outing, Shadow Command was awful, while the one before, Strike Force was excellent.

In Rogue Forces, you are reminded of the young Dale Brown who, with the first of his 21 books, thrilled us with Flight of the Old Dog. In my off the cuff estimate, Id say that more than half his books since have been stinkers and none has ever equaled the first.

Rogue Forces shows some of the old Dale Brown: I had no choice but to lose sleep over two nights to finish it. One page just led to another and I didn’t want to put it down.

The story is built upon a few well-known and increasingly stale characters. Retired General Patrick McLanahan, who has blown up half the world it seems in previous combat missions of dubious legality, is now working for a private contractor. So is former President Martindale. Boyish genius Jon Masters, who seems a parody of Bill Gates, is there to provide miraculous technological inventions. Current President Gsrdner is still there, as treacherous and dishonest as ever and filled with hatred with McLanahan, who has the goods on him. The libidinous Stacy Anne Barbeau is now Secretary of State and still, shall we say, intimate with the President, while his wife waits upstairs in the White House. No surprises here: all these characters serve like coat hangers for Brown to hang his story on. And quite a good story it is this time around.

President Gsrdner has been rushing the withdrawal of American military forces from Iraq, leaving the emerging state unsteady. US built airbases have been turned over to the Iraqi Army, with American forces as tenants. Increasingly, private contractors are performing duties once the province of the military. In fact, at Allied Air Base Nahla near Mosul, Iraq, the beleaguered American commander is surprised to find that former (trouble making) General Patrick McLanahan has shown up with Jon Mssters and a new wonder plane, the XC-57. Colonel Wilhelm, the commander of the American contingent, is a cartoon character.

The real story is that the PKK, a Kurdish Communist group, demanding an independent Kurdish nation created from parts of Turkey, Iraq, Syria and Iran has been conducting guerrilla operations in Turkey. Turkey feels that the Iraqis, Americans, EU, UN and everyone else doesn’t care and isn’t doing enough to stop these raids.
Events start popping quickly; McLanahan is doing his usual thinig with his wonder airplanes and other weapons - and before you know it, President Gardner wants McLanahan in jail, the Turks are preparing for war and the Iraqi Army has disappeared.

The action is fast and furious. Brown fills every page with action and keeps the reader engrossed. The magic airplane, the XC-57, does its stuff (blowing things up and gathering information from almost everywhere), there are powerful drones, Jon Masters mini-satellites which have appeared in other Brown books, lots of air and ground combat action and some political stuff that is almost believable.

Happily, Brown put a restraint on his attempts at sex scenes, a blessing for the reader.

Overall, the story of a conflict between Iraq and Turkey over the Kurds is believable and Browns handling of the technology is almost faultless.

It was great to lose myself in a good thriller for a couple of days and gratifying that Dale Brown has once again let his talent lose. Good stuff.

Jerry

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