

# **Book Review: “Targeted: Beirut – The 1983 Marine Barracks Bombing and the Untold Origin Story of the War on Terror” written by Jack Carr and James Scott**

**Atria / Emily Bestler Books. 464 pages.**

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Jack Carr, author of the wildly popular fictional work *Terminal List*, has partnered with James Scott, well-known military history writer, to craft his first nonfiction work, “*Targeted: Beirut – The 1983 Marine Barracks Bombing and the Untold Origin Story of the War on Terror.*” *Targeted: Beirut* is a well-researched and compelling history on the American military and U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East with a significant focus on culminating events in Beirut. The quality of the book is substantial, and the in-depth research brings the reader face-to-face with the tragic events of October 23, 1983. After all, it was on that day that a suicide bomber attacked the U.S. Marine barracks in Beirut, Lebanon, killing 241 American service members. Even more significant, many would note the attack on the Marine Barracks altered the trajectory of U.S. foreign diplomacy and military involvement in the Middle East for the foreseeable future.

The authors open the book by reconstructing all of the associated events proceeding the lead-up to the bombing of the Marine barracks, chronicling the geopolitical complexities of post-civil war Lebanon, the rise of Hezbollah, and the broader context of regional and global politics. Some of the details in the book draw upon only newly declassified materials, interviews with survivors and policymakers, and a careful examination of failures at a variety of levels in both the military and government. One thing is for sure; this book does not try to reduce the complexity of the event but instead weaves a historical narrative through what the authors consider the most significant point shaping America’s future approach to counterterrorism. In many ways, for America, *Targeted: Beirut* provides a historical accounting for the birth of what many would come to call the “War on Terror.”

So, why should the Army Warrant Officer read this book? Simply put, any Army officer must have an understanding of all aspects of the greater global operational environment. Politics, policy, global affairs are all elements in the global operational environment that contribute to an eventual breakdown in the competition continuum, potentially leading to conflict between parties. *Targeted: Beirut* provides the reader with a perspective on what happens in the background of global affairs, discussing movements in Congress, the then Department of Defense, and even the office of the President. Additionally, there is insight into the perspective, thoughts, and eventual testimony by senior military leaders when required to provide forces for the first-ever mission of “presence.”

Many historians simply brief over the Beirut bombing, but Carr and Scott provide the moment in time their full attention. The most shocking thing, albeit beneficial all the same to the reader, is the provided firsthand account of the gruesome effects of such a large-scale attack. Future warfare requires preparation, and that includes preparation of the mind for the horrors of war. The unfiltered accounts to the mass-casualty event describe how an overwhelmed battalion of Marines, worked through the chaos of a massive bombing, and found a way to stand back on their feet and continue to conduct their mission.

“*Targeted: Beirut*” is a vital contribution to professional military reading, with specific focus on the innerworkings of terrorism, military history, and U.S. foreign policy. This work describes the beginnings of a war that would grip a generation, and most likely continues in the shadows of the government and

the greater operational force. I highly encourage the Army Warrant Officer to engage with Targeted: Beirut, as this book will provide insight into what leads, or can lead, to eventual war. In short, works like this help military readers learn to read the tea leaves of current affairs and ultimately better prepare their formations to be ready when called to fight.

