



The Art of Women at War

Eileen Rivers

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From award-winning journalist Eileen Rivers, comes a riveting account of three women who fought in Iraq and Afghanistan—their dangerous, courageous, and often heartbreaking work was vital in defeating the Taliban and instrumental in the Pentagon’s landmark decision to open all combat jobs to women.

The three subjects of Eileen Rivers’s groundbreaking work of literary reportage lived in the sand pits of Iraq and Afghanistan. They carried 40 pounds of supplies in rucksacks and avoided roadside bombs as they fell in step with their male counterparts during long marches in the searing desert heat. They fired weapons out of the windows of military vehicles to help protect the men in their units. They did everything their male counterparts did in the throes of some of the toughest combat zones in the Middle East.

They also had a unique advantage over their male counterparts and their enemy: they were women. They risked their lives to gather intelligence on the Taliban from the women of Iraq and Afghanistan. They utilized their femininity (previously viewed as a hindrance in combat zones) as an asset to circumvent Muslim traditions and cultivate relationships with, spy on, and frisk women who were viewed as connections to the Taliban—women who were bound by tradition and refused to talk to American military men.

As members of the Female Engagement Teams (FET), the work of these three women and hundreds of others like them was vital in defeating the Taliban. It was dangerous, courageous, and often heartbreaking. Their work, like much of the work done by military women who have served in war zones before them, contributed to the Pentagon’s December 2015 decision to open all combat jobs to women. Yet the work of these American military women remains mostly unknown. This book is the first to tell the stories of these female military accomplishments.

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