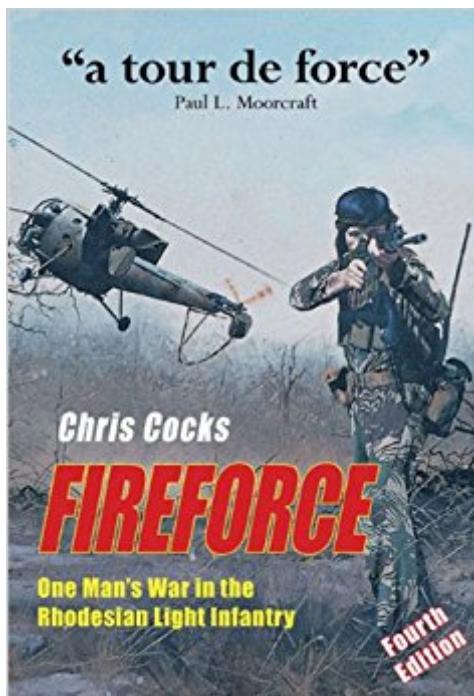


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# Fireforce: One Man's War In The Rhodesian Light Infantry



## Synopsis

The horror of guerrilla warfare in Africa Fireforce is the compelling, brutal but true account of Chris Cocks' service in 3 Commando, The Rhodesian Light Infantry, during Zimbabwe's bitter civil war of the 1970s—a war that came to be known almost innocuously as "the bush war". Fireforce, a tactic of total airborne envelopment, was developed and perfected by the RLI, together with the Selous Scouts and the Rhodesian Air Force. Fireforce became the principal strike weapon of the beleaguered Rhodesian forces in their struggle against the overwhelming tide of the Communist-trained and -equipped ZANLA and ZIPRA guerrillas. The combat strain on a fighting soldier was almost unbelievable, for the Rhodesians, who were always desperately short of ground troops, were sometimes obliged to parachute the same men into action into as many as three enemy contacts a day. While estimates of enemy casualties vary, there seems little doubt that the RLI accounted for at least 12,000 ZANLA and ZIPRA guerrillas—but not without cost. Fireforce is not for the squeamish. Although it has been written with unforgettable pathos and humour, it tells of face-to-face combat in the bush and death at point-blank range. It is a book which does nothing to glorify or glamorize war, for as Chris Cocks found at such a young age, war is merely a catalogue of suffering, destruction and death. Fireforce has been described by critics as being to the Rhodesian War what All Quiet On The Western Front was to World War I and Dispatches was to Vietnam. Read it—it will be an experience you never forget. Chris Cocks lives in Johannesburg. This is the fourth edition of Fireforce. He is a partner in the South African Publishing house, 30° South Publishers. Cocks is also the author of Out of Action and co-author of The Saints—The Rhodesian Light Infantry.

## Book Information

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## **Customer Reviews**

Written from an infantryman's perspective, this memoir of the Rhodesian Bush War takes the reader from intake to demobilization in a way that academic texts cannot replicate. The writer is no literature professor or other detached intellectual - he's was a grunt, a ground pounder, an Infantryman in one of the finest light infantry outfits in modern history. His accounts take the reader right down into the action, with no glorification or Hollywood style drama. This is an episode of history that more people could stand to read about, most especially for the facts surrounding the fall of Rhodesia, and the culpability of the west in helping the Communists to topple the last of the western style democracies in Africa.

This is a first-person account of one man's tour of duty in the Rhodesian Light Infantry in the late 1970's. The subject is interesting and if you are like me and have little knowledge of the conflict, you will come away enlightened. There are several issues with the book, however, The stories are often interrupted by transcripts of letters the author wrote home and articles in the battalion newsletter or newspapers. These distract from the flow of the narrative and would be better served being relegated to an appendix. There are also several spelling errors in the Kindle version. These complaints aside, the writing is generally good and the story itself is compelling. The author takes you from his enlistment to his discharge three years later, detailing the training and life in the infantry in a time of continual combat. He doesn't shy away from the brutal nature of the conflict at all and some passages are difficult to read. There is also a lengthy appendix with good information.

This book is awesome. My squad leader made this book assigned reading for everyone in the squad when I was a young paratrooper deployed in Afghanistan. Mr. Cocks does an excellent job of portraying his military service in the Rhodesian Bush War with good language and an in-depth narrative. I find most first-hand military accounts to be rather droll and annoying, but this one blew me out of my socks and gave me that much more pride for being a combat paratrooper

The book, at first skim, can be hard to read. Slow with the intake training, feeling that you may or may not have missed something important. Then you delve into the combat... The gritty, honest, and ultimately human experience of the war. A war that should never be forgotten. Mr. Cocks takes you through his tour as a national service conscript and subsequent enlistment to become a regular into the fireforce of 3rd Commando. He reminds us what was going on in this little country even more obscure than Vietnam or Korea is to most peers of my age. If you like history, if you like counter terrorism operations, or you just need a good read. Get this book.

The good and the bad. The author tells about atrocities committed on both sides. You do get the feeling that the guerrillas committed the atrocities as a simple matter of policy, while the Rhodesian (RLI) for the most part tried to avoid them ( except for a few unstable individuals). This was a question I had been asking myself. As usual, it was the poor innocent people in the middle who took the brunt from both sides. The bad is that the typos are so bad that whole words are often gibberish. Anyone who has not studied foreign languages (where it is common to compensate for unknown words) might have a rough time with this text. It was literally so bad, that I had to treat it as nearly a foreign language sometimes just try for context. On the other hand, if you fight through it, you will be rewarded with an honest account of what really went on among all the massive current propaganda about the war (ie. The idea that the guerrillas were gallant freedom fighters, or that the Rhodesian armed forces were aethical, etc). Recommended if you can get through all the typos.

In the introduction, it is claimed that Chris Cocks' FireForce was to the Rhodesian Bush War as All Quiet on the Western Front is to World War I. At first I dismissed this statement as self-boasting, however I was to find this was actually an accurate comparison. Both are well written, amazing, tragic stories of war as witnessed through the eyes of a young soldier. Now I myself have served 4 years in the US Regular Army- Active Duty. My service included a 12 month tour of duty in South Korea, and a 12 month deployment to Ramadi, Iraq, and I am currently serving in the Army National Guard. With this being so, I felt I could easily connect with the author's stories. His description of military life mirrors my own experiences in many respects (not talking about the intense close quarters combat the author described of course!). If this book was to be read by someone with no military experience, they may have difficulty understanding various military jargon and what not, but I doubt this would prevent one from enjoying the book none-the-less. I highly recommend this book to anyone who is interested in the recent past in regards to the decolonization of Africa, the oft

forgotten Rhodesian Bush War, or just interested in the counter-insurgency tactics employed by the RLI, tactics described greatly within the book and tactics that are studied today by American commanders in Afghanistan and elsewhere. I feel this book should be more popular than it already is, as I can't find any faults with it. It is neither outright pro-, nor anti-war, and written well enough to be enjoyed by all.

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