

## Martha Raddatz's Biography

By ABC NEWS June 5, 2017

Martha Raddatz is ABC News chief global affairs correspondent and co-anchor of “This Week with George Stephanopoulos.” She has covered national security, foreign policy and politics for decades – reporting from the Pentagon, the State Department, the White House and conflict zones around the world.

She began covering war during the crisis in Bosnia in the late 1990s, but it is Iraq and Afghanistan where she has spent most of her time overseas. Even during her stint as White House correspondent during President George W. Bush’s administration, she continued to make regular trips into war-torn Iraq.

Raddatz embedded with U.S. forces during dozens of trips abroad, from the sands of Al Anbar province to the mountains of the Hindu Kush. She is the only television reporter allowed to fly in an F-15 fighter jet on combat missions over Afghanistan, spending nearly 10 hours in the air on two separate missions. In 2011 she reported exclusive details on the raid that killed Osama Bin Laden. That same year she was one of the few reporters on the last major convoy out of Iraq. She also had an exclusive interview on the USS Kearsarge off the coast of Libya with the Marines who helped rescue two American pilots who had gone down in Libya. In 2012, Raddatz was on a U.S. destroyer as it made its way through the Strait of Hormuz. Raddatz reported exclusively from the USS George H.W. Bush, covering the airstrikes against ISIS in Syria and Iraq in 2014, and again in March 2016 from the USS Truman. In 2015, she was granted exclusive access to the anti-ISIS command center at an undisclosed location in the Middle East and anchored “This Week” from an air base from which drone warfare is conducted.

In addition, her reporting trips have taken her to Yemen, Iran, Pakistan, Israel, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, India, Turkey, Libya, Oman, the United Arab Emirates and numerous countries in Africa and Asia.

In October 2012, Raddatz moderated the only Vice Presidential debate between Congressman Paul Ryan and Vice President Joe Biden, which covered both domestic and foreign topics. Post-debate Raddatz received an outpouring of praise for asking pointed questions on a range of issues while asserting control over the conversation. She received the Walter Cronkite Award for excellence in political journalism with a special commendation for debate moderation. During the 2016 election Raddatz co-moderated the Democratic and Republican primary presidential debates on ABC as well a presidential debate between Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump, for which she once again received praise for her moderating skills.

From 1993-1998, Raddatz was the Pentagon correspondent for National Public Radio (NPR). Prior to joining NPR in 1993, she was the chief correspondent at the ABC News Boston affiliate WCVB-TV. In addition to covering several Presidential campaigns, she reported from the former Soviet Union, Africa, the Middle East, the Philippines and Europe.

In 2012, Raddatz received the First Amendment Award from the Radio Television Digital News Foundation (RTDNF) for excellence in journalism, as well as the prestigious Fred Friendly First Amendment Award. She received four Emmy Awards, including an Emmy for being on the team covering the inauguration of Barack Obama, the attacks of September 11th and the killing of Osama Bin Laden. She was also the recipient of the 2007 International Urbino Press Award, the 2005 Daniel Pearl Award from the Chicago Journalists Association, and a 1996 Overseas Press Club Award for her live coverage of the assassination of Yitzhak Rabin. In 2007 the White House Correspondents' Association awarded her the Merriman Smith Memorial Award for excellence in Presidential news coverage under deadline pressure.

Raddatz is the author of "The Long Road Home—a Story of War and Family," a highly acclaimed book about a battle in Iraq that made both The New York Times and The Washington Post bestseller lists. The Washington Post described the book as "a masterpiece of literary non-fiction that rivals any war-related classic that has preceded it."

Raddatz is the mother of a daughter and a son. She is also on the board of the Bob Woodruff Foundation that supports wounded veterans and their families.



## THE FLINTY INTEGRITY OF MARTHA RADDATZ

ABC's Martha Raddatz has covered 9/11, wars, Al Qaeda, ISIS, and heads of state, and has the ear of the military up and down the chain of command. Last fall the new leader of the free world took her on. Good luck with that, Mr. President.

BY LISA CHASE

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It's 10 days after the presidential election, and Martha Raddatz, back in her book-lined Washington, DC, office after a photo shoot, quickly de-pancakes her makeup and slips into slim pants, a puffy down jacket, and flats, all black. Then she curls up in a chair, a Pakistani rug woven with images of Kalashnikov rifles, tanks, and grenades at her feet, to talk about her work as a TV reporter in some of the most dangerous, machismo-loaded situations in the world.

"I was in Ramadi, and there was an older marine who said, 'Are you one of the good ones or one of the bad ones?' " she recalls. "And I just looked him in the eye and said, 'I don't know, Marine, are you one of the good ones or one of the bad ones?' "

"And he said, 'Okay, I gotcha.' "

Raddatz, ABC News's chief global affairs correspondent and, since last January, the coanchor of the Sunday show *This Week With George Stephanopoulos*, is an experienced journalist...a serious person...one of the good ones in a time when a lot of amateurs and opportunists are being allowed seats at various grown-ups' tables. She co-moderated the Access Hollywood–inflected presidential debate last October, to acclaim. She's been to the Middle East, Pakistan, and Afghanistan at least 50 times—she took her daughter, Greta, then 16, to Bosnia over spring break in 1997, "the extreme version of Take Your Daughter to Work Day," Raddatz says with a grin. ("For several years," adds Greta Williams, now a 35-year-old lawyer, "she also took my brother Jake and me to visit soldiers at Walter Reed," the national military medical center.) Raddatz is an expert on the U.S. military, the State Department and Pentagon, ISIS, Iraq, and Afghanistan. Three people interviewed for this story called her a "badass" and meant it as a compliment; one of them was Diane Sawyer.

Actually, what Sawyer said was: "Martha is fearless and badass and clear-eyed and tough. She doesn't change when she's with a general; she doesn't change when she's with a private. And since I've done some [combat-zone reporting] myself, I never know how she manages to look like she hasn't been run over in the field. Then she dresses up and knocks out the room. I have a picture of the two of us walking into the White House Correspondents' dinner" looking glamorous. "I love that she was saying, See, I can do both."

And while Raddatz may prefer being out in the field to her domestic duties—when asked which she'd choose first, moderating a presidential debate or reporting from Iraq on the military offensive in Mosul, she answers quickly, "Mosul"—she is formidable as an anchor-interviewer. Two of her mentors were the late Gwen Ifill and Peter Jennings, and like them both, she's always hyperprepared and can think on her feet. She worked for Jennings until he died, in 2005. "Peter was so intellectually curious," Raddatz says.

"When I first started, it was a little terrifying to talk to him. We'd joke that he'd play Stump the Correspondent: He'd ask, 'What do you want me to ask you?' You'd tell him, and then he would ask you something else on the air. The guy would go through your scripts a hundred times, and there would be some tiny nugget in there, and he'd want to know more about that. There came a point where I said, 'You know what, Peter? You can ask me anything you want.' And I believe that was the day it totally changed. Because it was like, You know what, Peter? I'm confident, I know my stuff, I'm ready."

To hear Raddatz's staff talk about her, she gets the same respect, and expects the same professional rigor, from them. Each week before the show, she's given 100-plus pages of research to digest. "I totally lose sleep before each big interview," she says. Her style is to ask a pointed question—she has interviewed presidents, vice presidents, generals, members of Congress, Cabinet members, you name it—and if her guest replies by pivoting to his or her talking points, Raddatz circles back. And back, and back again—polite, but insisting on an actual answer to her question. It's not to play "gotcha"; it's because it's a question that has yet to be asked or answered, one born of her deep reading and reporting. When she interviewed Mike Pence for *This Week* regarding Donald Trump's about-face on Barack Obama's birthplace last summer, it took Raddatz 11 attempts and 6:37 minutes of airtime to try (and fail) to get Pence to answer: "On Friday, for the very first time, Mr. Trump said that Barack Obama was born in the U.S. Why did it take him so long?"

You, the viewer, may feel a little uncomfortable watching her do this. Because, frankly, you're not accustomed to it. What you're accustomed to is talking heads on 24/7 cable networks and morning shows gliding smoothly on when their questions are deflected or ignored, for fear of seeming too aggressive and hurting any future access.

"I am not partisan. And that is my job on television, not to be partisan," Raddatz says, which is probably integral to why she was chosen to moderate three primary and vice presidential debates, as well as the October 9, 2016, presidential debate with Anderson Cooper. She started studying hard for that one just after Labor Day. But, 36 hours before broadcast, the 2005 Access Hollywood tape leaked in which Trump bragged about groping women and getting away with it because of his celebrity. "We'd done so much research on everything. We had not done research on that," she says. "Both of us just went into a zone: Okay, what do we do with this? It's part of temperament, it's part of character." The plan had been for Raddatz to handle foreign policy; Cooper, the questions about temperament. "I said to Anderson, 'I think you absolutely have to ask him if he did it.'" She adds, "Would I have liked to have asked that? Yes."

Her daughter Greta, 25-year-old son, Jake, and husband, longtime NPR correspondent Tom Gjelten, attended the debate, in St. Louis. "Our hotel was crawling with journalists and pundits and advocates on both sides," Gjelten recalls. "Martha said, 'They're going to be looking at you and the kids for any indication of what you think.' We were on our best behavior. We get to the hall, and there are all these empty seats next to us. Rudy Giuliani shows up with the four [women who accused Clinton of sexual assault, guests of the Trump campaign], and they sit right down next to us."

While Cooper got to ask Trump the "Did you commit sexual assault?" question, it was Raddatz, looking, well, badass in a chic zippered midnight-blue jacket ("Club Monaco. I went out one day during the convention in Philadelphia and got it"), who kept the audience in line. It was she who interrupted the candidates' interruptions and kept the crazy energy in that hall from engulfing all sanity and substance.

"I do think you have to take into consideration that in TV you're viewed a little differently as a woman; though, gradually, people have gotten used to that," Raddatz says. "But when you're pressing and pressing and pressing—I mean, men can look like jerks too, believe me—but if you go too far, if you ask the question 150 times, you have to figure out when to stop: when the story becomes about you instead of the person you're interviewing. That's something you do in debates, too. You're doing that math in your head. You do not want the story to be about you."

Raddatz was born in Idaho Falls, Idaho, in 1953, but after her father died, when she was three ("I have zero memories of him"), her mother, who was from Salt Lake City, moved Martha and her older sister back there. That's where Raddatz grew up. "My mother was raised Mormon but didn't raise us Mormon," Raddatz says. "We went to a Catholic church a little bit, but ended up going to a Protestant church in Salt Lake City."

She enrolled at the University of Utah but dropped out in her junior year to go to work "filing videotapes" at a local TV station, KTVX. In the words of the 2015 commencement speech she gave at Kenyon College upon her son Jake's graduation, "I had one simple goal in mind. I said to myself, There are sinners out there somewhere, and I'm going to find them." Not to convert them: Raddatz was looking for adventurous people, for an adventurous career.

Over the next few years, she worked her way up, and across the country, "shooting film and doing whatever I could," she says, eventually becoming a reporter and landing as chief correspondent at the ABC affiliate in Boston, WCVB, in 1979. "I liked every story, whether I was a local reporter doing the cop beat or whatever; I loved the disciplined curiosity of it. And early on, I didn't like people who were just on television to be on television. I wanted them to be television journalists, and journalists first."

It's not hard to see how, with her intelligence and wide-ranging interest in the world, combined with her blond good looks and wry sense of humor—and being the kind of woman who for a long time could and did carry her own military gear in the field—she'd be married to three very interesting men along the way. In 1979, she married Ben Bradlee Jr., Greta's father (an editor on the Boston Globe investigations unit that uncovered the Catholic church's pedophile priest scandal, which was dramatized in the movie *Spotlight*). In 1991, she married Julius Genachowski, eight years younger than she (and a Harvard Law classmate of Barack Obama), with whom she had her son. In fact, she was pregnant with Jake when Genachowski—who later served Obama as Federal Communications Commission chairman—began a clerkship for Abner Mikva on the U.S. Court of Appeals in DC in 1991. On bed rest, Raddatz found herself in a new city, trying to get Greta settled in a new school, and jobless. "It was not a happy time," she says. After Jake was born, she freelanced for CNN, and then, in 1993, the Pentagon beat at NPR opened up—"which I thought sounded like a brand-new experience."

At NPR, she befriended Gjelten, who'd been the organization's foreign correspondent for a decade and then was covering the war in Bosnia. "I came back to DC in 1994, '95," he says, around the time Raddatz was offered her first combat-zone assignment, which was to get into Sarajevo. The problem was, she had to cross an active front line to do that. "Bosnia was then the big story. She's always been drawn to the biggest stories," Gjelten says. Raddatz asked him the safest way into the city. This was NPR, not ABC, and her crew included just one sound engineer; there was no budget for security. "I was the Bosnia know-it-all," Gjelten says, laughing ruefully. "I'd heard that there was a bus from Split to Sarajevo."

Ah, the bus. "When I think back on it," Raddatz says, "if I'd known how scary it was, I might have reconsidered [the assignment]. I didn't know where I was going, really. I had no idea. I remember getting on this bus, which had bullet holes all over the front, and thinking, What have I done?"

"I'd told her, 'Just get on that bus. There's nothing to it,' " Gjelten remembers. "But the bus dropped her off on the front line. She was stuck on the front line. She managed to convince someone to take them into the city. She got there and got on her satellite phone and totally chewed me out."

Obviously, they worked through it, because they'll have been married for 20 years this May. Gjelten, who is now NPR's religion and belief correspondent, is refreshingly frank about what it's like to be married to a high-powered woman with an intense work ethic who travels regularly to war zones.

"When I met and married Martha and she became a foreign correspondent, I made a really deliberate decision to move into a support role. It's been a struggle for me. I'm a guy! And she has a guy's role! But I've picked up some slack around the house. I probably had a bigger role with Jake when she was traveling," he says. (Jake, who is now a high school coach, made it into the news himself when he mischievously programmed his mother's cell to ring with rapper Chamillionaire's "Ridin'," and it went off during a 2007 White House press briefing. Raddatz told the story at the 2012 VP debate as an "Audience, turn off your cell phones" cautionary tale. The next day Chamillionaire tweeted: "Can't lie. That just made my night. Appreciate it. @MarthaRaddatz Keep it gangsta.")

Several women at ABC noted that Raddatz and Sawyer, 63 and 71, respectively, are their role models—seriously ambitious women with full family lives—in a business that has increasingly fembotted its female anchors in hair, makeup, dresses, and heels more suited to a cocktail party than a policy interview. Fox News, which seems to have made an art of sexualizing its female on-air talent, was in the headlines for much worse last summer, when one of its former anchors, Gretchen Carlson, filed a sexual harassment lawsuit against the network's chief, Roger Ailes. Other Fox News employees, Megyn Kelly among them, chimed in that they too had been harassed by Ailes.

When I try to get Raddatz to comment on the pressure on women in broadcast news to look, uh, hot, she smiles: "You're trying to get me to go there, and I'm not going there." Raddatz favors sharp skirts and pants and fitted jackets, body-con suits with zippers, silk blouses in poppy and other bright hues. She has a great sense of style. When on assignment in the Middle East, she says, "I always make sure to wear a bright scarf," and it's true; in video after video from Iraq and Afghanistan, she's wearing a pretty scarf over khaki clothes or a bulletproof vest.

Her husband thinks that the very fact of her being a woman has worked to her benefit in covering the military. "They're disarmed by her, and her style of reporting, which is to establish personal relationships with people," Gjelten says. "I think she knew that, she took advantage of that. That's the instinct she brought to the Pentagon. And people she talked to in the beginning rose to full colonels or generals." In other words, she's developed great sources.

She covered the Pentagon for six years at NPR before joining ABC News as the State Department correspondent in 1999. She embedded with American troops in Iraq during the Gulf War and covered a combat mission over Afghanistan from an F-15 fighter jet. Her coverage of the State Department in the aftermath of 9/11 won her a Peabody Award and an Emmy (she's won a total of four Emmys, plus many other awards). When her colleague and friend Bob Woodruff was critically injured in a 2006 bomb blast

in Iraq, Raddatz worked her Army and Air Force connections to get him emergency surgery in Iraq, and then airlifted to a U.S. military hospital in Germany. A year later, she published the best-selling *The Long Road Home: A Story of War and Family*, about a routine detail gone horribly wrong in an ambush of American troops in Sadr City, Iraq, in 2004, told through the stories of the men and women who fought it, as well as their families back home. She was in Iraq as recently as November, in the month between the debate and the election, where she covered the Iraqi Army operation to take back Mosul from ISIS.

In a long career, Raddatz says that "the original Nightline reports about the Sadr City battle" are probably the pieces of which she's proudest. She was in Baghdad in 2004 when she heard about the platoon of soldiers who'd been ambushed—eight were killed and more than 60 wounded. While she was reporting the story for Nightline, one general she talked to said, "You should interview the families." She recalls, "It was like, Oh, of course I should." Critics have called the book the Black Hawk Down of the Iraq War, and the National Geographic Channel is turning it into an eight-hour scripted miniseries to air later this year.

"I'm proud of pushing myself," Raddatz says. "If I was just doing the same thing every day, I wouldn't grow; I wouldn't learn anything. Probably my first major outside-the-comfort-zone [assignment] was the VP debate" between Paul Ryan and Joe Biden. "I mean, I hadn't covered the campaign, I hadn't covered politics since—well, I covered George W. Bush's White House, but covering George W. Bush's White House was [basically] covering the war in Iraq and Afghanistan."

The decision to shift her into an anchor job last March was "very easy," says James Goldston, ABC News president. "She's essentially unassailable on foreign affairs. She's been everywhere and interviewed everybody. She's been an integral part of coverage in Washington. When the opportunity for This Week arose, there wasn't even a question."

Her foreign policy expertise also made her an obvious choice to moderate a presidential debate, during which "we were seeing all kinds of Twitter feeds about Martha, about what a rock star she was," Goldston adds.

Sawyer, herself a news anchor and reporter at ABC for almost 30 years, says, "Martha has redefined being a war correspondent. When you look at the war reporters now—Martha, [CBS's] Lara Logan, [CNN's] Clarissa Ward—I really have to hand it to television, which has been supporting women in the field a long time. It's in part because television loves variety. It's as simple as what makes you look up and pay attention. A woman in a war zone makes you look up, even now."

Martha Raddatz does not want the story to become about her, but on Election Night, it did. Around one in the morning on November 9, Alex Griswold, at the blog Mediaite, posted "ABC's Martha Raddatz Fights Back Tears While Discussing Implications of Trump Presidency." (Actually, her voice cracked slightly when she said, "The people in the military defend the Constitution. That's what they do." It's worth noting that in regular conversation, her voice breaks from time to time.) Soon Facebook and Google algorithms were filing the post under "news." After that, knee-jerk liberal and conservative Tweeters were blasting it around as fact. Even though Mediaite issued an "update" later that day—changing the headline to "Appears to Choke Up" and adding: "in fairness to Raddatz, at the time of this report, she had been on air for nearly 7 hours live reporting about the election"—the story had morphed into "Martha Raddatz Meltdown" and worse. "That story drove me crazy," she says. "I can't let those

things drive me crazy. But I also am going to defend myself. That blogger never even called me to ask if I was crying. I was not crying. And I was not choked up, either."

Two weeks later, our president-elect, himself quite the connoisseur of social media, criticized Raddatz and her purported tears during a now-famous meeting with top network brass and anchors in New York, where he berated the whole lot of them as biased liars. Afterward, Raddatz approached him and said, "Mr. Trump, that story was bullshit." But on December 1, Trump was at it again, telling the crowd at a Cincinnati rally about the network anchor (never naming her) who, he said, cried on TV on Election Night when she realized that he was going to win. "You know what she doesn't understand? Things are going to be much better now," he declared.

To which Raddatz replies, "That [crying] story is fiction. And I have made that clear to President-elect Trump. I was tough on Hillary Clinton and tough on Donald Trump during the campaign. And I will continue to be tough and fair as I cover the new administration. I am not intimidated by anyone."

This story started out as a sort of eulogy for the broadcast news I grew up with in the '70s and '80s, with Raddatz as a twenty-first-century outlier, an example of what was once great about the business and is fast disappearing. "The last woman standing. The last person standing" is how Andrew Tyndall, author of the evening news—analyzing blog Tyndall Report, describes her. "The people at ABC are obviously very high on her," he says, "but she has much more turned into an interviewer, rather than a reporter."

Tyndall made news in November after he published research showing that, in 2016, the nightly newscasts of the three major networks had collectively devoted 32 minutes to the candidates' policy positions, stories that, he says, "outline the societal problem that needs to be addressed, describe the candidates' platform positions and proposed solutions, and evaluate their efficacy." Yes, it sounds kind of...dull. And yet very necessary.

Tyndall, who has tussled with ABC over his criticisms of the network's news direction, sent me numbers showing that Raddatz's airtime on the evening news, reporting on foreign and military policy, has gradually declined. (He doesn't monitor Sunday news or morning shows or newsmagazines.) In 2003 and 2006, she clocked 286 minutes and 279 minutes, respectively—her peaks. (The war in Iraq began in 2003). Raddatz's lows occurred in 2008, with 74 minutes; as of November 2016, she had a mere 49 minutes. "The decline in 2016 partly follows the pattern of the previous big election year, 2008," Tyndall says in an e-mail. "You can interpret the overall drop-off in her airtime since 2007 two ways: (1) the change in the editorial philosophy at ABC News [to de-emphasize international and national security coverage], (2) the difference between the Bush and the Obama presidency, the former being more committed to foreign wars, which is Raddatz's specialty." There's another possibility: that her reported stories are appearing more and more on This Week. It's her day job, after all.

Goldston doesn't buy Tyndall's methodology. "Martha's been to Iraq for the news division more than 30 times," he says. A timeline of her travel from the past year is impressive, no matter how you contextualize it: In November 2015, she reported from Irbil, Paris, and Brussels on the terrorist attacks. In March 2016, she was aboard the USS Harry S. Truman carrier, filming the bombing runs of two young pilots (one with the code name Johnny Kittens). In May, she was back in Baghdad, Ramadi, and Irbil with Gen. Gary Volesky, her longtime source and a major figure in her book. In August 2016, she went to France and to Estonia on another F-15 flight, this one engaged in war games along the border with Russia. And in the last week of October, two weeks after the presidential debate and a week before the

election, she was in Irbil and near Mosul, reporting on the Iraqi army's fight to retake Iraq's second-largest city from ISIS.

On election night, I watched the early results come in from the jam-packed control room at ABC in New York. As I entered the building that night, a young woman ahead of me stopped to change out of her flats and into three-and-a-half-inch heels. I looked down sheepishly at my own flat feet. "Everyone dresses for this," she said. "This is a special night."

Raddatz was in her seat on the dais-like set, along with most of the ABC political brain trust. There were a lot of expensive bells and whistles: a Facebook Live set outside the studio, tickers announcing election data, Nate Silver and his FiveThirtyEight team piped in, and correspondents at Trump and Clinton headquarters—all teed up to watch Hillary Clinton become the first woman president of the United States.

You know the rest. For the next 10 hours they were on the air, and despite all the talent and analysts and analytics, the network, like all the networks, had to reckon with the fact that none of them saw Trump's victory coming. Even Raddatz—who'd hit the road in an SUV with a small crew to interview undecided voters in Texas, Oklahoma, Missouri, Illinois, and Ohio in July—says she hadn't had a real inkling. When I asked her, postelection, how she'd do her job going forward, covering an administration where the truth is thus far pretty truthy, she said, "I think we need to do our core jobs as journalists." For a moment, she seemed stumped. "I think you need to approach the way you've covered...." Then resolute: "That core job doesn't change."

Over the weeks I interviewed her and others, and watched the new administration begin to form, I observed the panicky protest mania from the left, the gleeful bullying from the alt-right, and the mainstream media taking in the enormity of its failure in covering the election amid a tsunami of fake news. And my point of view on TV news turned, strangely, more hopeful.

It seems to me that good, old-fashioned broadcast journalism has a chance to be broadly relevant and powerful, even to a generation of people who don't watch TV—who don't even own TVs.

"Don't you think," says Sawyer, "that it's like we've all been riding the rapids of Internet and cable and social media, and now we'll have to decide whom to watch? And Martha is one of them."

It was images from broadcast TV news reports in the '60s and early '70s, beamed into Middle American homes, that created the momentum for the civil rights movement and that ended the Vietnam War. Video is perhaps the most powerful tool for presenting an undeniable truth. In a way, that Access Hollywood tape is exhibit A. TV made Donald Trump—and it very nearly undid him. No amount of spinning could cause viewers—voters—to unsee what they'd seen on their screens. Imagine a business where more reporters take a page from Martha Raddatz, and we might learn something new. We might find our way out of this mess. The world might change.

I tell Goldston that Raddatz strikes me as being from the old school, but he couldn't disagree more. "She's all the way new-school!" he practically roars. "She is one of a kind."



## Martha Raddatz on National Geographic's "The Long Road Home"

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National Geographic's new series "The Long Road Home" is based on the best-selling book by journalist Martha Raddatz about soldiers sent to Iraq on a peacekeeping mission in 2004 who were ambushed on a day that came to be known as "Black Sunday." The series is powerful, inspiring, and deeply moving as it lets us into the lives of those who were there and their families. In an interview, Raddatz talked about how she got the story, what she learned, and what she hopes the series, premiering tonight as we prepare to observe Veterans' Day, will teach us about the people who risk their lives — and give their lives — for our freedom and for each other.

The news footage from Vietnam on the news every night played a significant role in eroding the support for the war. We do not see that kind of coverage of what our troops are doing in Iraq and Afghanistan.

We did in the beginning. It was it was on all the time and take it from me because I was covering it. But it hasn't been more recently and never in this way, in the way we tell this story about U.S. soldiers and their families and particularly families. It's a really realistic, really raw, really warts and all, very nuanced look at war, if you can imagine nuanced war, this has got it.

*What does nuance mean when you're talking about war?*

These aren't a bunch of action figures. There is lots of breaking down doors and things like that. But they're also very distinct people, regular people, real people. These are not Navy SEALs. These are not elite forces. These are soldiers who went over there thinking they were involved in a peacekeeping mission and found themselves ambushed and the other men in the battalion who reached out to rescue them in whatever vehicles they could find. Some of them are still serving on active duty, and I can't remember a time when a series has portrayed soldiers still on active duty.

*Was that an impediment to you in reporting on the story? Were there a lot of restrictions on what the soldiers were allowed to talk about?*

They shared everything they possibly could with me. And one of the most remarkable things about this series is that the Army gave it its blessing and cooperated with us. They allowed us to shoot on base and build a 12 acre set with 85 buildings.

I think in so many ways right now Americans are ready to see this. And the Army is ready to see this. The Army is ready to say, "This is what we did and this is how we fought. This is where we went into places where we were totally unprepared for what was to come." They saw everything before we shot it, including scenes with anti-war protesters. There's an entire episode about a soldier who became a very outspoken war protester. So that is the kind of eye-opening experience you have with this series.

We see very clearly in the series that this is a war that's being fought in the streets and in people's homes.

It's about as hand to hand combat as you can get. You look each other in the eye. There are some remarkably intimate scenes with soldiers facing down an enemy.

*What have you learned about courage through reporting and telling this story?*

Sometimes the people who are most courageous are the ones you never expect to be. You cannot predict it. But I also learned that courage is defined in different ways. It's not always the ways you think. When we walk into a situation sometimes it takes a little while to find the courage to find that leadership or to find that bravery that keeps them going. Everyone finds it in a different way. And again some people don't. And that's the kind of broad spectrum you have.

*Why was it important for you to talk to the families as well as the soldiers who were directly involved?*

It's the soldiers who told me to go talk to family because they said, "If you think it's bad for us you should see the families and what they went through and what they have to experience and just not knowing." The soldiers know what's happening; they know what's coming next. Those families just have to wait and their courage and their bravery every day, starting with that day of the ambush and years that follow this unit is I think really eye-opening for people. One of the wives would not drive into the garage behind the house without driving by the front of her house first just to make sure there was not a car up there that was going to notify her of her husband's death.

*Your work has been in television. What could you do in a book and now in a series re-creating the events that you cannot do in television news?*

When I first began reporting on the story, we never had any video. From the descriptions from the soldiers and the survivors of that battle we can see it come to life in the miniseries. It is the first time I've seen that come alive.

*What is it that you want people to talk about with their families after they watch this show?*

I want people to talk about the cost of war and to understand what it means to go to war. I want people to think about their responsibility to be informed and to have a voice to vote to do whatever it is that involves them in those life and death choices because fewer than one percent of our country serves in the military. Ninety nine percent do not. And the very least people who do not serve can do is understand the consequences.



## **MILITARY NEWS**

### **Tributes to 'Black Sunday' Vets at Premiere of 'The Long Road Home'**

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FORT HOOD, Texas -- On March 31, 2004, soldiers from 2nd Battalion, 5th Cavalry Regiment, said goodbye to their families and departed for Sadr City, Iraq, on what was expected to be a low-key peacekeeping mission.

Five days later, eight of the troops would be dead and more than 60 wounded on what would become known as "Black Sunday," a horrific series of ambushes and valiant rescue attempts that would precede 80 days of brutal and costly fighting in the city.

On Oct. 27, many of the same 2-5 troops and their families crowded into Fort Hood's Abrams Gym, the same place they had said their goodbyes more than 13 years before.

At the screening of the new National Geographic miniseries, "The Long Road Home," which tells the story of Black Sunday hour-by-hour through the eyes of the soldiers and their loved ones, the mood was both somber and celebratory.

Veterans posed for photos with the actors who played them on the screen; families embraced and huddled in groups during an intermission between episodes.

Outside the gym, several mental health counselors sat at a table holding brochures about veteran suicide and post-traumatic stress, ready to talk to anyone in the audience who found the gritty portrayal of war too reminiscent or simply too difficult to watch.

"The Long Road Home" is based on a book of the same name by ABC Chief Global Affairs Correspondent Martha Raddatz, who began to report on the troops of 2-5 while the horrors of that deployment to Sadr City were still unfolding.

"This is a very emotional night for me," she told the audience ahead of the screening, her voice quavering. "This community has embraced me for 13 years. You have shared your stories; you have shared your soldiers; you have shared your families. This story and this project means more to me than anything I have ever done."

Producers of the series and the cast, many of whom attended the Fort Hood screening, also spoke with feeling about what the project meant to them.

The entire series was shot on-base, with Iraq street scenes recreated in painstaking detail at a Fort Hood urban training complex. Two veterans of the battle, Aaron Fowler and Eric Bourquin, worked on the show as technical advisers; many other soldiers and family members stayed in contact with the production team throughout the project, offering their insights and memories.

Actor John Beavers, who plays Bourquin in the series, was seldom far from his real-life counterpart. Other cast members joked about the bond that had grown between the two men, down to shared mannerisms.

Beavers said the responsibility of portraying those who had sacrificed so much was weighty "to the point of buckling our knees." But, he added, the cast had quickly been embraced by the soldiers and by the families of the fallen.

"We had the guys that lived it and the families that experienced it telling us that they believed in us, that we could do it before we even believed that about ourselves," he said.

"And ... I have yet to share a story with another actor who could say they were getting ready for a big scene. They knew it was going to be action-packed and emotional, and they were able to walk over to their real-life counterpart and ask them ... can you please walk me step by step through what actually happened in this scene so I can recreate it as close to life as possible."

Ian Quinlan, who plays Spc. Robert Arsiaga, one of the soldiers killed in action on Black Sunday, said he reached out to Arsiaga's brothers and sisters, inviting them over to his home to share a meal.

"I wanted them to tell them how I felt and hear more stories about Robert, and to be a part of this process," he said. "I was so honored to help tell this story and to hear that I had their approval and, 'We're behind you every step of the way.' "

Mikko Alanne, showrunner and screenwriter for the series, said he first became involved in the project nine years ago when executive producer Mike Medavoy sent him a copy of the book.

"I read the book all in one sitting and just fell in love with the soldiers and their families," he said. "It was one of those unique things that you saw right away, so many fascinating real-life stories. I've always felt like nothing is more precious and fascinating than ordinary life. And all these families, they deployed together."

In an era of films like "War Machine" that emphasize the politics of conflict, "The Long Road Home" is disarmingly sincere.

It lingers on the baby-faced soldier blinking sweat out of his eyes and trembling as he watches for shooters from a rooftop. It feels the full impact of small acts of heroism and determination, as when a soldier hesitates for a moment before standing to man a Humvee's turret gun immediately after the previous gunner has been killed in an ambush. And it toggles regularly back from the heat of the battle to the spouses working to maintain normalcy at home while waiting anxiously for news of their loved ones.

The series emphasizes the diversity found in combat as well.

While some soldiers display toughness and swagger, others are intelligent nerds who play the fantasy role-playing game Dungeons and Dragons in their spare time.

One weathered staff sergeant seems to be in Iraq under protest due to a stop-loss measure, only to display extraordinary heroism in the heat of the fight. All, like the soft-covered Humvees and slim detachment of Bradley Fighting Vehicles they deployed with, were unprepared for the crucible of war they would encounter in Sadr City.

One of the soldiers, Pfc. Tomas Young, would be paralyzed by wounds received in the fighting. He would return home and become an outspoken protester of the Iraq conflict, his story featured in the 2007 documentary "Body of War."

Young's brother, Nathan Young, attended the screening with his wife Amanda.

"That was intense. I almost broke her hand," Young said after viewing the first episode.

A former cannon crewmember with the Army's 101st Airborne Division who deployed twice to Iraq, Nathan Young spoke in clipped sentences, struggling to control his emotion when he spoke of Tomas, who died in 2014. His mother, Cathy Smith, told The New York Times that "his body just wore out."

"[Tomas'] story lives on," Young said about the series. "He did quite a few amazing things ... he touched a lot of people's hearts, and he only wanted to help people."

Carl Wild, who was then a specialist and is played in the series by Thomas McDonnell, said it was surreal to see himself portrayed on the screen.

"I'm still processing it, I think. I'm a little bit in shock," he said, after the two-episode premiere screening concluded.

Wild, who was medically retired in 2012 and now is working on a bachelor's degree in radiology, said he had emailed with McDonnell during production and given him advice about the sorts of things he used to do to prepare for missions and how he'd act in his spare time.

After seeing the show for the first time at the screening, Wild approved: McDonnell, who plays him with a quirky sensibility, had been cast perfectly, he said.

But what Wild was really concerned with, he said, was ensuring the men his unit lost were portrayed as heroes and that their memory was honored in the project. That has been done, he said.

"This is every Iraq veteran's story," he said. "There's stuff that's involved in this process that didn't necessarily even happen to us, but it's things that went on during the war and they added it to the film, so they could tell those guys' stories. This is all of their stories."

Dinah Rodriguez, mother of Spc. Israel Garza, who was killed in action on Black Sunday, said it was difficult for her to be in the Abrams Gym, as she hadn't been able to make it to base to see her son off in 2004.

"It's very emotional," she said. "But at the same time, I'm very proud of my son."

Elements of Garza's portrayal in the series by actor Jorge Diaz rang especially true, she said, such as a scene showing a playfully affectionate phone conversation between Garza and his wife Lupita.

"[Garza] always said he was going to be famous," said his cousin, Renee Mata. "It was true; he was right."

"The Long Road Home" premieres Nov. 7 on the National Geographic Channel.

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