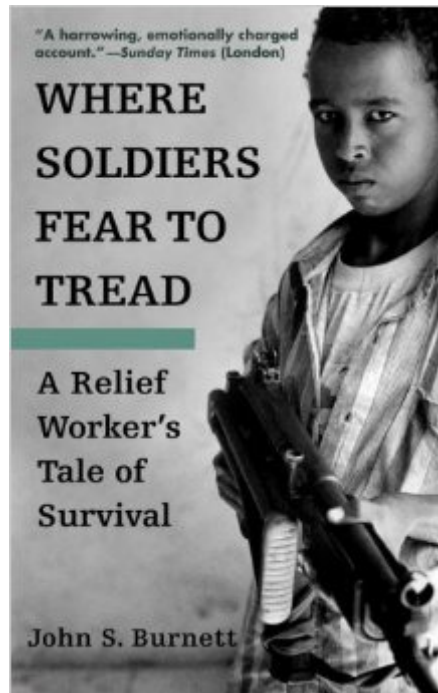


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# Where Soldiers Fear To Tread: A Relief Worker's Tale Of Survival



## Synopsis

“There is going to be a shooting here and it is a toss-up who is going to get the boy’s first round. The soldier, about ten years old, is jamming the barrel of his gun hard against my driver’s face, and unless the kid decides to go for me, the relief worker, my driver is going to get his head blown off.”

**Where Soldiers Fear to Tread** John Burnett survived this ordeal and others during his service as a relief worker in Somalia. But many did not. In this gripping firsthand account, Burnett shares his experiences during the flood relief operations of 1997 to 1998. Ravaged by monsoons, starvation, and feuding warlords, Somalia continues to be one of the most dangerous places on earth. Both a personal story and a broader tale of war, the politics of aid, and the horrifying reality of child-soldiers, his chronicle represents the astonishing challenges faced by humanitarian workers across the globe. There are currently thousands of civilian workers serving in over one hundred nations. Today, they are as likely to be killed in the line of duty as are trained soldiers. In the past five years alone, more UN aid workers have been killed than peacekeepers. When Burnett joined the World Food Program, he was told their mission would be safe, their help welcomed “and they would be pulled out if bullets started to fly. When he arrived in Somalia, Burnett found a nation rent by a decade of anarchy, a people wary of foreign intervention, and a discomfiting uncertainty that the UN would remember he’d been sent there at all. From Burnett’s young Somali driver to the armed civilians, warlords, and colleagues he would never see again, this unforgettable memoir delves into the complexity of humanitarian missions and the wonder of everyday people who risk their lives to help others in places too dangerous to send soldiers.”

**Where Soldiers Fear to Tread** is a rousing adventure story and a troubling morality tale....If you’ve ever sent 20 bucks off to a relief organization, you owe it to yourself to read this book.”

—Michael Maren, author of *The Road to Hell: The Ravaging Effects of Foreign Aid and International Charity*

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"Where Soldiers Fear To Tread" is a startling, well-written book, that revealed to me a world I never knew existed. You hear about relief workers in some far away regions of the world and sometimes you read that they are kidnapped or killed. But to read a first hand account of how John Burnett survived these hazards brought the news of these stories straight home. Some of the scenes will likely give me nightmares for months to come. Whether or not you care about relief work, this book is a great adventure story that is hard to put down.

There are not many books that you pick up and don't put down until its finished but I've found one. It starts fast and stays that way, building the suspense. The TV survival shows pale in comparison to the events in this book. This is fascinating read and it certainly opened my eyes, from the politicizing of aid to dodging the bullets in a war zone. These people, the relief workers, are the real heroes. As the cover says - anybody who gives 20 dollars for a humanitarian crisis, better read this book.

This book reads like a bullet train from New York to Mogadishu, from heaven to hell, a pageturner if ever there was one. You get a privileged insight into the life of a reliefworker, a first hand account of the absurd madness of a godforsaken place where anarchy rules and where lives have no value. Speedboats donated by western governments to distribute relief supplies quickly turn into perfect terror tools for local warlords, who find them to be ideal to impose their will on the population, specially when mounted with a machine gun...John Burnett completely repaints the picture that I had in my mind of a relief worker. Only guts, ingenuity and a whole lotta luck will help you to get out alive of a place like this. From the comfort of your home to the nightmare of Somalia is just a book away...

Superbly written and very hard to put down, this book throws quite a few surprises. Burnett provides first-hand insight into the adventurous and dangerous world of those on the field who distribute humanitarian aid. Relief workers, like those they are trying to help, survive crocodiles, snakes and hippos, feuding warlords, and child soldiers. At the same time they are dealing with competing aid

organisations and governments' political and military agendas. Through tears, anger and frustration, he reveals what it is like trying to save lives in a war zone.

Mr. Burnett gives us an "in the trenches" view of Somalia. This is Anarchy 101 up close and personal. The dysfunction and bumbling bureaucracies of the UN and other Relief Agencies are disappointing. I was amazed and appalled as his experiences unfolded. I hope the situations have improved in Somalia AND the relief agencies, but that is probably wishful thinking. I found this book to be very informative. Things haven't changed much since "The Ugly American". The plight of Relief Workers needs remediation.

This book is a perfect summary of the dark side of humanitarian work. Unequipped, unprepared contract workers who are unprotected and essentially thrown to the wolves. The author answers a fax looking for boat drivers and the only preparation he's given is a night at a bar and told to watch out for displaced wildlife. From the moment he steps off the plane it goes downhill. Even a good deed ends in tragedy because he doesn't understand the population he's trying to help. Mostly though this is an indictment of the conditions the relief workers have to deal with because different UN agencies and Non governmental organizations all want to show how much they are "helping". The individuals may do good things but the organizations use it to play politics.

This is a well-written, fast-paced book that sheds an important light on relief work, its benefits and its risks. I knew very little about the floods in Somalia, and this was a great lesson as to what I missed. Great read. You won't be disappointed.

Burnett provides a vivid picture of the logistics and politics surrounding relief work as well as the dangers and difficulties of doing this work in a war zone. What I liked best about this book is he didn't enter into this job with any particular altruistic or political agenda. As a result Burnett is able to paint a rather honest and impartial picture of NGOs, the UN, the people of Somalia and his fellow aid workers. The book is written in a way that lets you experience what he experienced. It is a personal account that keeps you turning the pages.

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