

Terror's Sword

Kevin Kuhens

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"There is no paradise for cowards." Perhaps that is one motivation for destroying the world: to prove courage and thus gain entry into heaven. Ali bin al-Dosari, (aka Terror's Sword) does everything for Allah.

Thriller readers who look for blends of high-octane action tempered by attention to psychological interplays and acts of political desperation will be attracted to the terrorist encounter that plays out in *Terror's Sword*.

Here, the sword of death and destruction is wielded by an attacker who sports a deadly bioweapon and is headed for the U.S. to wreak havoc.

A desperate president taps the only resource that might be able to match this clever and elusive opponent: Kyle McEwan, a counterterrorism mastermind whose weapons prove as formidable as his deadly enemy.

Once unleashed, Kyle is a force to be reckoned with, as murder and kidnappings surround his efforts to eliminate the danger. He's not alone, because all facets of science and government are united in not just locating Terror's Sword, but finding a cure for the deadly force he is set to unleash.

When all fail, Kyle is the last left standing.

Unlike many thrillers about terrorist threats, Kevin Kuhens injects added value into his plot: the inner workings of bureaucratic and political processes which serve to work against themselves and each other as desperate men and entities struggle against an impossible weapon and timeline.

This allows readers to more closely inspect not just a bioterror threat, but the mechanisms on both sides which unwittingly create an environment in which it can flourish independent of original intentions or the best efforts of terrorists and anti-terrorists to affect the outcome.

As the terrorist sends messages to the world that circumvent the best efforts of authorities to stifle them, readers receive engrossing, realistic scenarios that

provide thought-provoking glimpses into the logic and nature of terrorists who believe their actions are firmly rooted in faith ... and desperation.

Time is taken to fully develop the characters on both sides of events, which gives readers satisfying opportunities to better understand the underlying motivations of actions. This adds to the story's depth and gives it more of a social and psychological perspective than action alone, creating a standout that tempers tension with understanding.

As McEwan tracks his killer across three continents and awaits an enemy's final error that will give him the upper hand, events are not set in stone, but hold some surprising twists. These keep the reader not only on edge, but thinking about various possible outcomes.

The result is a powerful saga that probes Presidential actions, traps, moves and countermoves, and special ops processes that embrace various government departments, different methods of handling adversity, and ultimately places the onus for American security squarely on the heads and shoulders of the men and women who serve in the armed forces, law enforcement, and intelligence agencies.

The juxtaposition of all these agencies and elements affects the final outcome, tailors Kyle McEwan's responses, and ultimately outlines a bigger political struggle that goes beyond clashing special interests to examine the religious and political machines that create them.

Libraries and thriller readers looking for the chess-like moves of worthy opponents who are each backed by a conviction and belief that their actions are of paramount importance to the world will find *Terror's Sword* replete in satisfying confrontations both idealistic and political.

Given its contemporary and thought-provoking moments, *Terror's Sword* is also recommended for book clubs and groups interested in social and political probes who will find much fodder for discussion in a fictional story that could, on many levels and under the right conditions, come true.

D. Donovan, Senior Reviewer
Midwest Book Review