

TERROR'S SWORD

A Kyle McEwan Thriller
Book 1

KEVIN KUHENS

PRAISE FOR
TERROR'S SWORD

Terror's Sword “definitely satisfies as the pace never falters, the cutting-edge timely plot never stumbles, and the ending delivers. A romp of a read.”
—Steve Berry, *New York Times* and International #1 Bestselling Author

Terror's Sword is a counterterrorism espionage thriller that goes into the deep state, politics at its absolute worst, and the heroism of those trying to do what's right inside government. Kuhens knocks it out of the park with this one.” —Grant Stinchfield, Emmy Award-winning investigative reporter, radio and television personality, and national podcaster

“A fast-paced, spellbinding plot that takes readers on suspense-filled missions to save the world. Readers will love this breathtaking action-packed thriller and won't be able to put it down!” —Foluso Falaye, *San Francisco Book Review*

“A powerful saga that blends high-octane action, psychological interplays, and acts of political desperation that probe presidential actions, traps, moves and countermoves, and special ops processes.” —Diane Donovan, *Midwest Book Review*

“Kuhens' writing is reminiscent of the great thriller authors Frederick Forsyth and Robert Ludlum. With a heroic character on the scale of a Jason Bourne, *Terror's Sword* is a top-flight, fast-paced story guaranteed to satisfy readers across genres.” —Rex Allen, *Readers' Favorite*

“The author's prose is captivating. The action scenes are edge-of-your-seat brilliant. You may find yourself gripping the reader or the book so tight, that your knuckles may bleed.” —*N. N. Light's Book Heaven*

“Mesmerizing! Kuhens' action descriptions were so realistic they put me in the scenes alongside the characters! Great plot and never-ending misdirection. Colorful, well-developed characters including a very powerful female lead.” —P. Atencio, *Goodreads*

“*Terror’s Sword* is a superb combination of suspense and intrigue that will keep readers on the hook until the very end. A highly distinctive work with memorable characters and a fast-paced storyline.” —*BookLife*

“The author has given us a well-researched, well-plotted, well-paced, and very realistic fictional book that mirrors non-fiction in many ways. We have a new hero in the vein of James Bond, Jason Bourne, Jack Ryan, and Jack Reacher.” —James L. Thompson, Jr., Supervisory Special Agent (retired)

“Unlike many thrillers about terrorist threats, Kuhens injects inner bureaucratic workings and political processes which serve to work against themselves and each other as desperate men and entities struggle against an impossible weapon and timeline.” —D. Donovan, Editor, *Donovan’s Literary Services*

“Spectacular Debut Novel! A lean, mean thriller where characters are quickly and convincingly rendered and the plotting immersive and compelling. I recommend this book highly for any fan of the political action/thriller genre.” —S. P. Johnson, *Goodreads*

“Kuhens brings you as close to real world as it gets, real locations, real scenarios, genuine religious complaints. Revenge is a powerful motivating factor and Kuhens milks this for every penny. These military scenes were as close to actual as you can get.” —G. Coker, *U.S. Air Force Pilot*

“An incredible read for high-action junkies! The author’s rich descriptions literally painted mental images putting me in the scenes. The action was so riveting and intense I could feel my heart pounding. Great, authentic characters.” —B. Detra, *Amazon*

“Action packed. Adrenaline filled. Rich characters. You won’t be able to put the book down. A work of fiction that could become reality.” —LTC M. J. Vowell, *US Army*

“Every page overflows with explosive action. If you only have time to read one action-packed novel this year, this page-turner is it!” —*Beach Reads*



Islam says: “Kill all the unbelievers just as they would kill you all! Kill them, put them to the sword and scatter them. Whatever good there is exists thanks to the sword. The Sword is the key to Paradise, which can be opened only for the Holy Warriors!”

— Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini
Islam Is Not a Religion of Pacifists (1942)



CHAPTER ONE

SHIELDED BY DARKNESS, Ahmed Mansour stole into the American University of Beirut Medical Center. Arriving at his office, he entered and threw the deadbolt, locking himself inside. Despite offering no real protection, the paper-thin walls might buy him time to achieve a single goal: living long enough to expose the conspiracy.

Mansour's hypervigilant ears detected squeaky leather soles creeping to a stop outside his office. A loud rap on the door's opaque glass window sent him burrowing beneath his desk. Stifling cries, he curled into a ball, waiting, seconds ticking away. He stole fleeting glances at his watch as a minute elapsed, then two. *Nothing*. Inhaling deeply, Mansour swallowed and peeked around the desk.

A misshapen face, pressed tightly against the frosted window, cast a roving whale's eye toward Mansour's hidey-hole.

The doorknob creaked slowly, turned partway, then stopped. Panic raced through his veins—every nerve in Mansour's body fired simultaneously, waves of nausea roiling over him. The door rattled violently in its frame, squeezing the air out of Mansour's lungs and gripping his heart. Trapped inside his stockade, death seemed seconds off.

The anonymous assailant, thwarted by the engaged deadbolt, muttered a curse and kicked the door vigorously. Slamming a fist into a wall, the stalker abandoned his mission.

Mansour remained stock-still after the footsteps vanished, the only sound in his ears the pounding of his heart. He controlled his breathing;

his lungs filled, returning his heart rate to normal. *They are here looking for me!*

Mansour weighed the odds his hunter would revisit his office against the dangers of executing his plan in public. He concluded he would find safety among the old men munching pistachio nuts and playing backgammon down at the Beirut waterfront. Wiping perspiration beads from his upper lip, Mansour tiptoed to the door and placed an ear against the window. *Silence*. Grasping the knob and turning it, he pulled the door open a crack and glanced at the ceiling security mirror. *Corridor empty*.

He squeezed through the narrow gap into the hallway. Clicking the door shut softly, he locked it with a deft flick of his wrist then pocketed the keys. Tiptoeing to a stairwell, he hurried down the steps to the bottom landing. Dropping to a knee, he feigned tying a shoelace, a ploy to smoke out tails. *None*.

Mansour straightened up and crossed the medical center lobby in four long strides, leaning so hard into the exit door it banged loudly against the outer wall. No one seemed to notice. Moving swiftly past an ancient banyan tree and a guard shack, he hustled up to Abdel Aziz Street. Balancing on the curb, he looked to his left and right, then scooted over to the sidewalk. Turning toward the main campus, he melted in with students arriving for classes.

The bespectacled Mansour caught himself continuously twisting his head and darting his eyes. Slowing his pace, he lifted his eyeglasses and dabbed the trickling rivers of sweat from his face and neck with a handkerchief. Scouring the cars parked two- and three-deep on Bliss Street, a movement in the bright early sunlight caught his eye. *Young man on cell phone—cutting and weaving through cars. Sunglasses—cannot read his eyes. Heading toward me!*

Mansour turned abruptly through the main campus stone entrance as the college hall tower bell tolled the hour: seven o'clock. A sharp glance over his shoulder revealed the young man entering the university grounds

several paces behind. Alarm bells clanging, Mansour stopped to study the terraced green slopes and jasmine trees highlighted by rays of sunshine.

The man, chatting animatedly on his cell phone, walked by without a glimmer of interest.

Mansour resumed his expedition to the Mediterranean waterfront. Passing through the Avenue de Paris pedestrian gate, safely bolstered by other commuters, he relaxed. Retrieving a prepaid disposable cell phone from his pocket, he dialed a memorized number; the call connected after a short delay. Several agonizingly long rings later, a mechanical voice answered, "Leave a message after the tone."

Concentrating on leaving his message, Mansour did not see the looming threat until it was too late. Barreling toward him was his imagined young stalker from before, now sans sunglasses, his eyes burning with malevolent intensity. Mansour was paralyzed, his sixth sense screaming, "Flee!" but his feet remained glued to the asphalt, causing him to miss the second threat—a delivery van skidding to a stop. Escape route blocked, he was easy prey for two hooded men leaping out of the side door. Strong hands seized Mansour's flailing arms, dragging him to the van. A shoulder launched into his back, driving him through the door opening. The cell phone flew from his hand, skittering across the steel floorboard. Multiple fists pummeled his face, crumpling orbital bones. Innumerable punches savaged his stomach, kidneys, and liver.

Ahmed Mansour's world disintegrated into a mass of searing pain and blackness.