

An Interview with Kevin Kuhens, Author of *Terror's Sword*



Kevin Kuhens is the author of the award-winning Amazon #1 Bestselling *Terror's Sword*, the first of his thrillers involving elite counterterrorism operative Kyle McEwan. His book has garnered significant recognition, including the 2023 Winner of the Mystery/Thriller Gold Medal from the prestigious Military Writers Society of America, among others.

During an international career spanning three decades, Kevin served as a civilian supervisory special agent for the U.S. Department of Defense with the Office of Naval Intelligence, Naval Investigative Service (now known as NCIS), and the Pentagon's criminal investigative arm, DCIS. Additional information, including a book trailer, can be found at www.kevinkuhens.com.

Who/what made you want to write? Was there a particular person, or particular writers/works/art forms that influenced you?

I've always been a strong writer, more so in a technical sense, but I can put pen to paper. The challenge was combining those skills with my creative mind and vivid imagination to put a readable, enjoyable story on paper. Compounding the challenge, I elected to write a novel in one of the most competitive genres. Could I do it? I accepted the challenge, with *Terror's Sword* as the result.

I'm a voracious reader exposed to many fine authors, but two are inspirations. One is the prolific, clever, and entertaining author, the late John D. MacDonald. The other is Steve Berry, the exceptionally talented international bestselling author of over thirty historical thrillers. I had

the great fortune of meeting Mr. Berry early in my writing career, and he graciously shared his experiences. The gist was to expect rejection, frustration, and many other roadblocks. His sage advice: never give up, roll with the punches, and keep going. Do what is necessary to satisfy your urge to write. These words hit home with me as they mirrored my life experiences.

What other professions have you worked in? What's something about you that your readers wouldn't know?

I worked every job I could find putting myself through college. Times were tough in those days—long, lousy hours for meager wages and equally long hours studying. But I never gave up; I rolled with the punches and kept going, doing what was necessary to get my degrees. For my novels, I draw on my professional background as a federal investigator to immerse readers in the behind-the-scenes inner workings of military, intelligence, and law enforcement operations that thwart terror threats. I mix into my stories tangible and intangible real-world factors impacting investigations: politically charged decisions and agenda-driven turf battles by unscrupulous, scheming power brokers.

Tell us the story of your book's title. Was it easy to find, or did it take forever?

The basic premise of my book is an anonymous revenge-fueled terrorist determined to destroy America and the only man who can stop him. As I began writing the chapters involving my antagonist, it became clear that the title had to be his nom de guerre, *Terror's Sword*. Here's a bit more to explain the title's genesis.

An attacker known by the alias "Terror's Sword" is heading for the U.S. with an unidentified bioweapon. His mission: erase America from existence. When intelligence agencies fail to identify the terrorist or his bioagent, the president taps elite counterterrorism operative Kyle McEwan to hunt down the terrorist and eliminate the threat. McEwan is the highly classified, off-the-books weapon America unleashes when all other methods fail. McEwan tracks the terrorist across multiple continents and executes daring raids that yield crucial evidence. Despite these discoveries, biomedical scientists urgently pursuing a cure conclude the highly contagious virus cannot be defeated, leaving the world to face a pandemic threatening millions. With the terror mastermind on the loose and determined to strike and McEwan resolved to stop him, who prevails?

I settled on the chosen title for several reasons. One, it mentions both the antagonist and protagonist on the front cover. I wanted prospective readers to flip the book over and read the back cover for an explanation of the book's title and to find details on the two main characters and the plot and see what others are saying about my story. The title also suggests more books are coming in a series. eBook readers garner the same information from the summary posted on the site where they see the book.

How did it feel when you first saw your book cover? Or when you first held your book in your hands?

There was definitely a wow! factor—a tremendous sense of accomplishment and pride. Holding the first copy of *Terror's Sword* in my hands was a special feeling that will stay with me.

What is one thing you hope readers take away from reading your book? How do you envision your perfect reader?

I want readers to take away several things from *Terror's Sword*. At its core, it's a government insider's investigation of a genuine but fictional terror threat that readers quickly recognize could happen. It's a page-turner appealing to readers across genres who enjoy psychological interplays that drive plot twists and high-octane action. Alongside McEwan, readers work furiously to identify the killer and his bioweapon, discover critical details about the planned attack, and participate in explosive action scenes. As a result, readers experience—like McEwan—the tension, frustrations, and exhilaration that come with success and failure in a high-pressure investigation. How do I envision the perfect reader? A reader who immerses him/herself in the world I created and enjoys living those experiences.

What was the most rewarding/meaningful part of publishing your book?

I always believed I was creative enough to write a novel, but I wondered if I had the skills to take it from ground zero to completion. It took a while for me to answer that question. I never imagined my book would become an award-winning, #1 bestseller, especially given the sheer number of talented authors writing in the genre. And I never expected to receive a 2023 Mystery/Thriller Gold Medal from the prestigious Military Writers Society of America. While grateful for the recognition of *Terror's Sword*, the feedback I receive from readers is even more rewarding. When asked, I can never find the words to adequately describe the gratification I feel having readers, renowned authors, and industry professionals state that Kyle McEwan follows in the footsteps of iconic protagonists such as Clancy's Jack Ryan, Child's Jack Reacher, Ludlum's Jason Bourne, and Thor's Scot Harvath.

What new writing projects are you currently working on? Or, other projects that are not writing?

I'm well into writing Book 2 in the *Kyle McEwan* series. Readers have set a very high bar for me, and my next thriller will not disappoint them. They will see more of the hard-charging McEwan doing his all to save America from her enemies. The story will have many new characters and another exciting, realistic plot with fascinating twists. I'm excited to write it!