By Major (retired) Chris Hunter

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Reviewed by Roger Green, Principal reviewer, U K Defence Forum

Major Chris Hunter, holder of the Queens Gallantry Medal, retired after 17 years service in the British Army.Ã‚Â (Chris Hunter is a nom de plume) Ã‚Â For most of that time he worked as a counter-IED (improvised explosive device) operator in a number of high threat areas including Northern Ireland, Iraq and Columbia and since retiring in Afghanistan.Ã‚Â He specialised in assault IED disposal operations in support of counter terrorism (CT) units, the police and close protection teams.Ã‚Â He was involved in the London bombings in July 2005 when he was seconded to COBRA as the suicide terrorism expert.Ã‚Â Hunter is already well known as an author for his first book 'Eight Lives Down' that was about his time as a bomb disposal officer in Iraq.

Hunter's narrative is extremely personal.Ã‚Â It is not really about his bravery, although that shines strongly throughout the narrative, but about the way his life has been affected by his single-minded pursuit of beating the bombers and the inevitable personal consequences.Ã‚Â When Hunter was at Sandhurst he was deeply affected by the pointless life and death of his drug addict brother that was the source of the demons in his head that he often tried to resolve.Ã‚Â At that point he considered leaving the army because he wanted 'to make a genuine difference' - he thought possibly through fighting global drug trafficking.Ã‚Â He was persuaded that he might achieve the difference he sought within the army by ultimately becoming a bomb disposal specialist.Ã‚Â His subsequent tour as a young officer in Bosnia exposed him at first-hand to the atrocities committed there and this added to his determination to become an 'ammunition technical officer' or ATO as the army call their bomb disposal officers.

Hunter's tale of his progress through training courses and various tours of duty is written in a typical military, punchy fashion, liberally spiced with anecdotes.Ã‚Â He avoids dwelling too often or for too long on the lonely 'long walk' that every ATO makes towards a deadly terrorist device.Ã‚Â He vividly illustrates that the fight against IEDs is not essentially a technical battle but one that is a battle of minds between the ATO and the bomb maker.Ã‚Â He frequently records his emotions at the death of a fellow ATO, all the sharper because he is a member of a very small and closed community. Ã‚Â During the latter part of his army career he describes his involvement with tracking the world's leading terrorists, disrupting their networks, and providing the security services with expert analysis on intelligence and an insight into the mind of the bomb maker.

Working in Iraq Hunter not only had to cope with the every day trauma of his work with the death and destruction all around him, but also was acutely aware of the impact on families back

in the UK.Ã‚Â His compulsive commitment to the army and bomb disposal with the associated and continuing burden on his family led to the break up of his marriage, as he says - EOD becomes Everyone's Divorced.Ã‚Â After his final tour in Iraq in 2008, Hunter's decision to leave the army for the sake of his family left a gaping hole in his life due in large part to his unresolved memories of years past.Ã‚Â With the inevitable consequences for his marriage, he found the draw of the front line of the EOD world too great and deployed to Afghanistan as a Private Security Contractor.

This account of Hunter's career is not written in heroic vein but reflects on his personal goals and experiences that by the very nature of his work would be nothing short of terrifying for most people.Ã‚Â It provides an insight into the full range of activities that comprise the fight against the terrorist and his weapon of choice.Ã‚Â He was fortunate in that he has survived despite being targeted by the bomb makers.Ã‚Â Many of his colleagues did not and this book is dedicated to their selfless sacrifice.

Hunter makes three pertinent observations about the ongoing fight against the bomb makers.Ã‚Â The first is that 'the enemy is quick witted, agile and unconventional and we are not configured to match him'.Ã‚Â Secondly, those conducting the war on terror have not understood that when terrorists fail against a target, it is in their nature to always come back and try again until they are successful.Ã‚Â Finally, he accuses Gordon Brown specifically and senior persons in positions of power of being 'too arrogant or too ignorant' to recognise that those risking their lives need more resources.

Major Hunter will be speaking at a U K Defence Forum briefing dinner at the House of Commons in July.