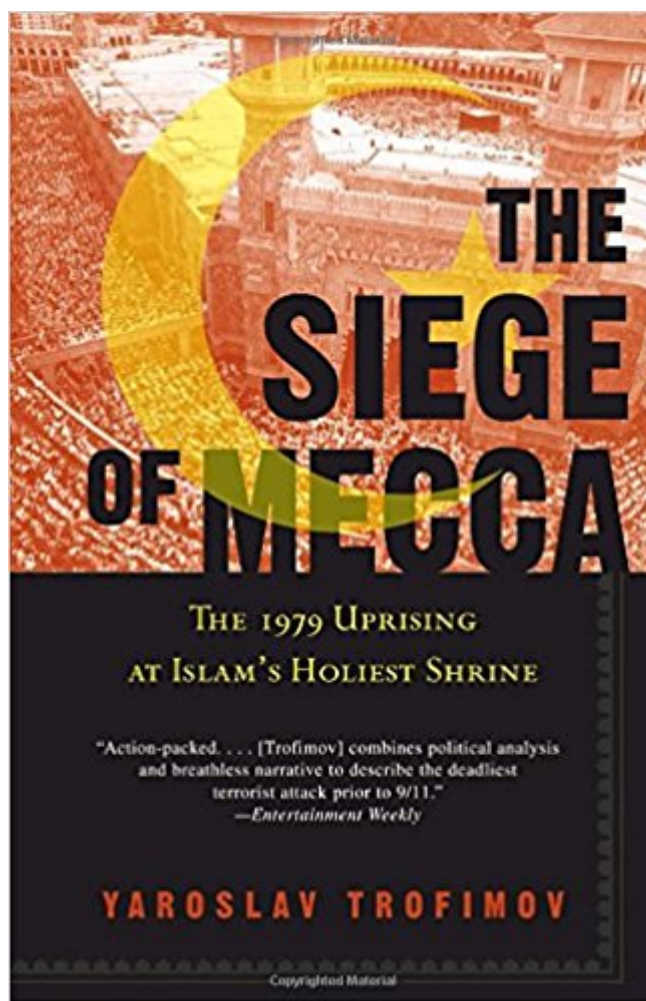


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# The Siege Of Mecca: The 1979 Uprising At Islam's Holiest Shrine



## Synopsis

In *The Siege of Mecca*, acclaimed journalist Yaroslav Trofimov pulls back the curtain on a thrilling, pivotal, and overlooked episode of modern history, examining its repercussions on the Middle East and the world. On November 20, 1979, worldwide attention was focused on Tehran, where the Iranian hostage crisis was entering its third week. That same morning, gunmen stunned the world by seizing the Grand Mosque in Mecca, creating a siege that trapped 100,000 people and lasted two weeks, inflaming Muslim rage against the United States and causing hundreds of deaths. But in the days before CNN and Al Jazeera, the press barely took notice. Trofimov interviews for the first time scores of direct participants in the siege, and draws upon hundreds of newly declassified documents. With the pacing, detail, and suspense of a real-life thriller, *The Siege of Mecca* reveals the long-lasting aftereffects of the uprising and its influence on the world today.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Trofimov, a Wall Street Journal writer and observer of the Muslim world (*Faith at War*), tackles an incident unreported in the West: the violent takeover of Islam's holiest shrine by Muslim fundamentalists in 1979. Carrying out his investigations in one of the world's most closed societies, Trofimov has crafted a compelling historical narrative, blending messianic theology with righteous violence, and the Saudi state's sclerotic corruption with the complicity of the official religious institutions. Trofimov aptly points out endemic regional problems with enduring repercussions for fighting terror, but is hampered by his sensationalist style (The world was twelve months away from the tumultuous events that would cover the mosque's marble courtyard with blood, spilled guts and

severed limbs). In 1979, the Saudi intelligence services apparently had no accurate blueprints of the Grand Mosque, and knew nothing of the underground labyrinth where many of the militants took shelter; they eventually received plans to the site from Osama bin Laden's older brother. Ringleader Juhayman and his followers have inspired al-Qaeda and countless other Islamic revivalist movements to ever greater acts of violence, even though they were mesmerized by their limited understanding of an obscurantist theology and were convinced that that one of their unassuming members was the Messiah. Casual readers will be well served by this introduction to Muslim fundamentalist terrorism. (Sept. 18) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

“Action-packed. . . . [Trofimov] combines political analysis and breathless narrative to describe the deadliest terrorist attack prior to 9/11.”  
• Entertainment Weekly  
“Fascinating . . . remarkable. . . . Anyone can read The Siege of Mecca, and everyone should.”  
• The Washington Post  
“[The Siege of Mecca] begins with all the menace of a political thriller. . . . Riveting.”  
• Conde Nast Portfolio  
“A gripping, highly informed narrative of this momentous event.”  
• Financial Times

This should be required reading for everyone who is trying to understand the catastrophic situation in the Middle East. The author tells the story of Wahhabi Moslem extremists, from many countries, attacking, and seizing, Mecca in 1979. This attack and the Saudi Arabian response was purely a fight among Moslems but it led to Moslem attacks on US embassies across the middle east due to Iranian propaganda blaming the US for the attack. In telling this story the author describes the history of the hundreds of years of radical Moslem religious turmoil leading up to this pivotal event. He then explores its aftermath and illustrates the continuing violence and terrorism associated with the Wahhabi extremism in many countries across the Middle East including the assassination of the Egyptian President Anwar Sadat. Today's events from ISIS to Iraq to Yemen to Syria to Iran to Pakistan to Afghanistan are much easier to understand given this perspective.

This was a fascinating book about a subject that I had never heard about before. I happened to hear about it on a podcast and I was intrigued enough to give it try. If you are a fan of world history, then you will love how this book brings all of the political struggles of the 70's and 80's together. Excellent book!

The author has done an exceptional job of researching and sourcing material for this amazing look at a pivotal event in modern Islam and Middle Eastern history. While I was vaguely familiar with the attempted siege of the Grand Mosque in Mecca in 1979, the details behind the takeover by Sunni's intent on overthrowing the Saudi Royal family and the ultimately "successful" subduing of the followers of Juhayman makes for a fascinating read and raises questions about the lasting impact of this event. Occuring shortly after the Iranian Revolution, Trofimov provides a revealing look into never before covered facts about how close the Saudi regime came to being overthrown, the ineptitude of the Saudi government departments in putting down the situation (National Guard, Dept. of Interior) and the role of the French special forces in assisting the royal family. Especially captivating were Trofimov's chapters on the harrowing situations for American diplomats and their staffs in Pakistan and Libya as Islamic students attempted to destroy the US Embassy's and quite possibly replicate the situation that existed in Tehran. For anyone intersted in the Islam and the Middle East, this book is an absolute must.

I was compelled to write a review for this book as I'm amazed at how well it was researched and written! I first heard of it from Shane Smith of Vice when he discussed it briefly while appearing as a guest on the Joe Rogan Experience podcast. That led to me downloading the sample chapter and I was quickly hooked! I bought the rest of the book and spent the next day or so glued to my Kindle! This book is so well written and is an easy page turner despite the scope and subject. I learned so much even though it felt like I was just reading a good action story! Now that's a great way to learn without feeling like you're doing homework!!! The amount of research and investigation for this project had to be astounding yet the author clearly did a thorough job and then was able to concisely convey the results with an absolutely gripping and compelling narrative. That's obvious talent, and it was a real eye opener for me too! Many of the other reviewers here explain the book in detail so I won't rehash it myself. I will however highly, highly recommend The Siege of Mecca! Go ahead, entertain AND educate yourself with this one!!!

This book documents the fact that Saudi Arabia is the source of modern Islam-based hatred of all non-Muslims and the call to murder them. Financed by petro dollars Saudi royalty, in exchange for stability of monarchy, has permitted untold thousands to "educated" (actually brainwashed) to the Islamofascist line. The face of that exchange is IS and AQ. IS is embedded in large civilian populations and is financed by a vast criminal network, not to mention oil money from confiscated wells in Iraq. Trofimov convincingly shows that the explosive vanishing point for the creation of the

army of terrorists that Saudi based Islamofascism has engendered today was its adherents' cowardly overtaking of the holy mosques of Mecca in 1979. That siege was amazingly suppressed from public attention then in pre-internet days. The book provides a well researched explanation for the root much of the current terrorist culture and the disastrous consequences of the West's historically tepid responses to it. However, some credit for the present day mess belongs to the Bush-Cheney Iraq war which empowered Iran and left Iraq in the cauldron of civil war. Terrorist attacks on innocent civilians throughout the West are surely going to escalate. Eventually, leaders in the West will be forced to solve the equation of how many civilian deaths here will justify the Dresden like firebombing of Raqqa and Mosul and the part of Libya that IS has taken.

This book gives the historical account of the takeover of the holy site in Mecca, an account which apart from this book is mostly suppressed, certainly by Saudi's, who see these events as a huge embarrassment. All that to say, this book fills the gap to a unique but very important piece of history. A second layer of the book, is how the events described actually led to the formation of many of the Islamic terrorist groups as we know them today. A third layer of the book, of course, is how this shaped the cultural and political/religious climate in Saudi today. A fourth layer, is the insights into the disagreements, hatred, and hostility among various Muslim factions. A fifth layer of the book provides a historical view of the Jimmy Carter era of Presidency. Don't get me wrong, Jimmy Carter is one of the nicest people ever to have been President, but overall, one of the worst President's ever. I lived through the Carter era and thought it was bad at the time, but reading this book made me realize I only knew the half of it.

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