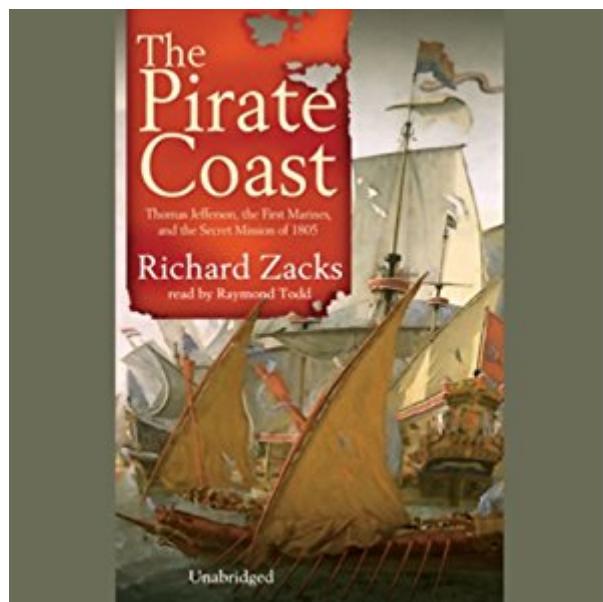


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The Pirate Coast: Thomas Jefferson, The First Marines, And The Secret Mission Of 1805



Synopsis

A real-life thriller -- the true story of the unheralded American who brought the Barbary Pirates to their knees. In an attempt to stop the legendary Barbary Pirates of North Africa from hijacking American ships, William Eaton set out on a secret mission to overthrow the government of Tripoli. The operation was sanctioned by President Thomas Jefferson, who at the last moment grew wary of "intermeddling" in a foreign government and sent Eaton off without proper national support. Short on supplies, given very little money and only a few men, Eaton and his mission seemed doomed from the start. He triumphed against all odds, recruited a band of European mercenaries in Alexandria, and led them on a march across the Libyan Desert. Once in Tripoli, the ragtag army defeated the local troops and successfully captured Derne, laying the groundwork for the demise of the Barbary Pirates. Now, Richard Zacks brings this important story of America's first overseas covert op to life.

--This text refers to the Audio CD edition.

Book Information

Audible Audio Edition

Listening Length: 13 hoursÂ andÂ 22 minutes

Program Type: Audiobook

Version: Unabridged

Publisher: Blackstone Audio, Inc.

Audible.com Release Date: July 1, 2005

Whispersync for Voice: Ready

Language: English

ASIN: B000A5CJJ0

Best Sellers Rank: #44 inÂ Books > Audible Audiobooks > History > Africa #790 inÂ Books > Audible Audiobooks > History > Military #898 inÂ Books > History > Military > Naval

Customer Reviews

Some people like suspense novels, some people like action adventure stories, and some people are real history buffs. This book will satisfy all three crowds. To find accurate history written in such an engaging, page-turning manner is a rare delight. The United States became a nation at a time when the Barbary States (Tripoli, Tunis and Algiers) were enjoying a piracy trade they had been running for three centuries. This robbery took place by forcefully taking a ship on the high seas, then keeping the goods and enslaving the crew and passengers. The pirates would hold prisoners for ransom--typically for a year, while they negotiated a price--then release them when paid. No country

would stand up to these pirates. In fact, other nations paid tribute to them to avert even worse problems. This cowardly state of affairs would have continued for centuries more, had not William Eaton headed up a mission to end the reign of one of the bashaws (a bashaw is a sort of king). This particular bashaw (Yussef) killed his oldest brother, who had been the rightful heir to the throne. Then, he took the middle brother's family hostage and sent him into exile--leaving Yussef the one occupying the throne. The middle brother, Hamet, wanted to regain his throne from his sadistic and unscrupulous younger brother. This is where William Eaton came in. To understand the central story, you have to understand Eaton. Zacks helps us do this, by showing Eaton engaging in the failures that brought him to the point where his adventure with Hamet began. Eaton had a sound military mind, but he was lousy at politics. He was constantly shooting himself in the proverbial foot, and his enemies took pains to make him suffer.

Long before our current war with Islamic extremists our young nation engaged in the War with the Barbary Pirates. It had almost become a footnote for history for many until the likes of journalists like Christopher Hitchens brought its events back into the spotlight. Now Richard Zacks's "The Pirate Coast" brings the events of the war of Barbary Pirates into sharper focus. During the Presidency of Thomas Jefferson our fledgling nation faced a thorny problem. The United States and other European nations were forced to pay tribute to the nations of the North African coast to do business in the Mediterranean or would be subject to attack by the Barbary pirates. The other nations of Europe went along with this practice but the US was against it not only on principle but because of its sheer cost (at one point we paid the Barbary pirates tribute which exceeded the entire US military budget). At the time the practice of the Barbary pirates was to commandeer foreign ships and sell their crew into slavery. Eaton was sent by Jefferson in 1805 on a clandestine mission to aid in a revolution going on in Tripoli. Now comes the intesteting character of Eaton. Eaton was by accounts a stubborn individual who seemed to get himself in trouble in every endevour he found himself in but Eaton was a super patriot who saw this mission as a chance to redeem himself. However the revolution in Tripoli sputtered. Jefferson was more than willing to aid a people in a revolution but wanted no part in overthrowing a government now that the revolution had been foiled. Eaton was promised a large amount of funding but at the last moment after Jefferson hearing the revolution in the area has failed Eaton is sent off virtually alone.

"The Pirate Coast: Thomas Jefferson, the First Marines, and the Secret Mission of 1805," by Richard Zacks, is an enthralling work of history. It's full of bold and colorful characters, fascinating

places, and perilous situations. Zacks takes us back to the early 19th century. The nation of Tripoli (modern-day Libya), which terrorizes the Mediterranean, declares war on the United States and eventually captures a U.S. naval vessel and its crew. Zacks tells the story of the military and political effort to free the captives. It's an epic tale that involves both land warfare in North Africa and naval warfare in the Mediterranean, as well as political intrigue in the city of Washington and diplomatic maneuvering in Malta and Tripoli. Although Jefferson gets mentioned in the book's subtitle, the real hero of the book is William Eaton, who leads "America's first covert military op overseas." He's a truly larger-than-life character. Zacks draws on a rich variety of sources from which to tell the story of Eaton's remarkable mission, and he incorporates substantial quotes from these sources in the narrative. By doing this he allows the voices of Eaton and his contemporaries to be heard. Interestingly, Zacks also points out to the reader the places where there are gaps in the historical record. In the book's acknowledgements section, Zacks describes in detail how he got access to the documents he used in writing the book. The book also includes a "Cast of Characters" guide, extensive endnotes, a thorough bibliography, and an index. Zacks' prose is witty, lively, and engaging. As he tells the story he includes many fascinating details--the use of lime juice for secret writing, the copious amounts of alcohol consumed by the builders of the U.S.S.

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