

Ghosts of War (A Pike Logan Thriller)

By Brad Taylor

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World war is on the horizon in *New York Times* bestselling author Brad Taylor's tenth heart-pounding Pike Logan thriller.

The Taskforce has stopped countless terrorist threats across the globe, operating outside of US law to prevent the death of innocents. But now, along the fault lines of the old Iron Curtain, the danger is far greater than a single attack. With Russia expanding its influence from Syria to the Baltic States, the Taskforce is placed on stand-down because of the actions of one rogue operator.

Meanwhile, Pike Logan and Jennifer Cahill travel to Poland, hired to verify artifacts hidden for decades in a fabled Nazi gold train, only to find themselves caught amid growing tensions between East and West. A Russian incursion into Belarus under the facade of self-defense is trumped by a horrific attack against the United States, driving NATO to mobilize even as it tries to determine who is behind the strike.

On the brink of war, Pike and Jennifer discover that there is a separate agenda in play, one determined to force a showdown between NATO and Russia. With time running out, and America demanding vengeance, Pike and Jennifer race to unravel the mystery before a point of no return is reached. Unbeknownst to them, there is another attack on the way.

One that will guarantee World War III.

Ghosts of War (A Pike Logan Thriller) By Brad Taylor Bibliography

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Editorial Review

Review

Praise for Brad Taylor and his novels

“Brad Taylor continues to solidify his claim as the best pure action thriller writer out there today. . . . *Ghosts of War* combines the anticipatory genius of Tom Clancy’s geopolitical tomes with the high-stakes plotting mastered by the likes of Brad Thor and Vince Flynn. A slam bang, read-it-till-you-drop thriller with as much brains as brawn.”

—*Providence Journal* on *Ghosts of War*

“In this tenth book featuring Pike Logan, author Brad Taylor will have your heart pounding and your pulse racing out of control.”

—*Suspense Magazine* on *Ghosts of War*

“*Ghosts of War* might not just be Brad Taylor’s best novel but the best thriller of the year.”

—ConservativeBookClub.com on *Ghosts of War*

“Brad Taylor continues to amaze. . . . [*Ghosts of War*] uses a bigger canvas than [Taylor] has employed previously, yet his transition is flawless, and is every bit as suspenseful, exciting and believable as his earlier novels. One can almost see the movement in the real world, following what he lays out in exquisite detail, in the next month or even in the next week.”

—Bookreporter.com on *Ghosts of War*

“Anyone who was a fan of the late legendary thriller author Vince Flynn should read Taylor, the heir apparent to the Mitch Rapp series. . . . *Ghosts of War* is action packed, fast-paced, and gripping.”

—*Crimespree Magazine* on *Ghosts of War*

“Fresh plot, great action, and Taylor clearly knows what he is writing about. . . . When it comes to tactics and hardware he is spot-on.”

—Vince Flynn on *All Necessary Force*

“*The Insider Threat* has nonstop action, and a very realistic plot. As with Tom Clancy novels he is able to write about serious dangers in a very suspenseful and intense way. Through well-defined characters and dialogue this novel is a page-turner that is a must read.”

—*Military Press* on *The Insider Threat*

“Taylor has become the heir apparent to the late Vince Flynn. . . . Military-thriller fans who seek realistic scenarios should consider Taylor mandatory reading.”

—*Booklist* on *No Fortunate Son*

About the Author

BRAD TAYLOR is the author of the *New York Times* bestselling Pike Logan series. He served for more than twenty years in the U.S. Army, including eight years in 1st Special Forces Operational Detachment–Delta, commonly known as Delta Force. He retired as a Special Forces lieutenant colonel and now lives in Charleston, South Carolina.

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Chapter 1

The Old Town, Fredrikstad, Norway

Four months ago.

The Range Rover made the turn onto the final road, a long stretch of gravel ending at what looked like a moat surrounding a fortressed town. In front of the water, the driver saw two men in uniform standing next to a fire barrel, compact assault rifles slung over their shoulders, hands hovering above the barrel to ward off the chill. He slowed instinctively. The passenger said, “Keep going. Don’t give them any reason to suspect anything.”

The driver huffed slightly, strangely giddy at the turn his life had taken.

Suspect? Right. I’m sure they won’t wonder why an American in a business suit is traveling with an Arab wearing ratty jeans. Or why I’m sweating like a whore in church in the middle of winter.

The American continued at reduced speed, using the melted snow on the roadway as an excuse, doing whatever he could to slow the inevitable showdown. The Arab said, “Easy. Very, very easy. You get us through this, and you’re free. Remember that.”

“Okay, okay. What do you want me to say? Should I tell them who I am?”

The American prayed the man with the gun would say yes, because he was sure there was a massive manhunt for him involving security agencies from at least two countries.

The Arab said, “No. Of course not. We are tourists like everyone else coming down this road.”

The Arab caught the disappointment on the driver’s face and smiled. “Remember, only one of us inside this vehicle is afraid to die.”

The American nodded, wiping the sweat off his upper lip. He pulled into the checkpoint and lowered the window. One officer approached while the other began a sweep of the undercarriage with a mirror on a shaft. The American gave a nervous smile and waited.

The policeman said something in Norwegian. The American said, “I’m sorry. English?”

With a heavy accent, the policeman said, “Business here?”

“We’re just visiting. We wanted to see the fortifications of the old town. Maybe go to the museum.”

“Okay. But the museum is closed.”

The American knew that. What was going on in the museum was the primary reason the man to his right held a gun. He felt nauseous and overwhelmed. Beads of perspiration rolled down his face despite the freezing air, a direct result of being squeezed between two armed men, one using subterfuge and the other

standing out in the cold precisely to penetrate the charade. He had nothing to do with either, but that would matter little when the bullets began to fly.

He stammered, "C-can we just see the old town, then? Surely the square isn't closed."

The officer studied him for a moment, then said, "Car registration, please."

The American felt the panic blossom. He had no idea if the vehicle even had valid registration, or where it would be stored. But the Arab did. Right hand held low, hiding the pistol, he used his left to dig through the glove box, pulling out a leatherette envelope and passing it through the window.

The policeman took it, saying to the American, "Are you all right?"

He wiped his upper lip again and said, "Yes, fine. A bit of a cold, I think."

The policeman said nothing, studying the forms inside the envelope. Still looking down, he said, "What is your name?"

The American knew whatever he said, it wouldn't match the forms the policeman held. The Arab knew it as well. The American stammered for an answer and caught movement in his peripheral vision. His brain recognized the nightmare a millisecond before the pistol went off right next to his face, the explosion consuming the inside of the vehicle, splitting his eardrums apart.

The policeman's head snapped back, blood sprouting out and the body crumpling. The American screamed, crouching down and covering his head. The Arab turned to find the other policeman. He was outside the passenger window, frantically attempting to bring his rifle to bear, the mirror dropped to his feet. The Arab fired through the window, shattering the glass and hitting the policeman in the chest, the bullet sending up a small puff of goose-down from his jacket, belying the destruction wrought beneath.

The policeman whirled in a half circle, then fell to the ground, crawling towards a ditch and clawing at the rifle on his back. The Arab exited the vehicle and stalked over to him, putting a boot into his back, pinning him in place. He yanked the man's head up by the hair, placed the barrel against the back of his skull and pulled the trigger, a plug of gore exiting the man's open mouth and staining the snow underneath.

The American sagged into his seat, the absolute violence destroying any vestige he might have had for self-defense. The Arab calmly returned to the car, walking around to the driver's side. He said, "Get in the passenger seat."

The American did so, numb. The Arab slid behind the wheel and rolled up the window. He locked the doors, then began digging beneath the driver's seat. He pulled out a small box the size of a cigarette package, a thin wire snaking back under the seat.

He flipped a switch on the box and a small light turned green. The American said, "What is that thing?"

The Arab bared his teeth and said, "Your ticket to paradise."

He put the Rover into gear and drove across the small moat, entering the ancient fortress.

For all of his fear and naiveté, the American was not a stupid man. He knew what the little container represented. The Arab's intentions had become painfully clear. This isn't a hostage situation. They never wanted me.

He was riding in a homemade cruise missile. A mobile bomb directed by a thinking, breathing human being. And he was going to die. None of the power from his position would alter that.

The vehicle made a left turn as soon as it crossed the moat, the Arab with one hand on the wheel and one holding the weapon aimed at the American. As if he could do anything now. He was close to catatonic, rocking forward and back in the passenger seat. Begging for a miracle.

The vehicle picked up speed, racing down the asphalt lane, the brick and stone buildings from centuries ago a blur outside the window. The American heard the Arab curse and opened his eyes. He saw the Arab staring into the rearview mirror. The American rotated around and caught a man on a motorcycle right behind them. A rider on a BMW, closing in on the bumper, no helmet, long hair blowing in the wind.

A man the American thought he recognized, but that would be impossible. Even so, he began to hope.

The driver began chanting in Arabic, stoically reciting something over and over. A brick wall appeared outside of the passenger window, protection for a courtyard built long ago. The museum.

They reached the end of the lane and the Arab whipped the Range Rover around the turn, tracking the brick wall. The American saw the entrance to the museum about two hundred meters ahead, a milling of men in suits walking to cars parked outside.

And another BMW motorcycle headed right towards them.

The bike raced by the entrance, security men shouting as it passed, brandishing weapons way too late.

The motorcycle grew larger, playing an insane game of chicken. To their left was an ancient berm, to the right the brick wall of the museum. There was no way to avoid each other. The Arab dropped the weapon and put both hands on the wheel, then floored the accelerator. The American screamed, jamming his foot against a non-existent brake pedal in the passenger well.

The motorcycle kept coming, the rider also without a helmet, his jaw clenched and teeth bared.

And the American recognized him as well, but couldn't believe it. There was no way that man was here.

They closed within fifty feet and the biker yanked his handlebars, diving off as the motorcycle went into a slide, the gravel spraying as it sliced into the ground.

The Arab screamed, jerking the wheel and slamming the vehicle into the berm. The world tumbled into a kaleidoscope of images. Sky, tearing metal, ground, shattered glass. The American slammed into the door, then the roof, coming to rest upside down on the seat of the Range Rover, the vehicle sliding to a stop on the passenger side. He heard nothing but the ticking of the engine.

The Arab to his right began to stir, slowly rising up and searching for the box, and the American realized he had seconds to alter his destiny. He slapped his hands on the man's wrist, and the Arab punched him straight in the mouth, knocking him back. He rose up, the siren call of self-preservation pushing him forward, and he heard multiple cracks, the Arab's face popping open as if someone had driven in fishhooks and then ripped them out.

The Arab toppled over in the seat, the box held in his hands.

The American sat still for a moment, stunned, the steam rising from the engine, one wheel still grinding as it rotated freely. He looked out the windshield and saw his savior. The man from the rear motorcycle, a huge

grin on his face and holding a smoking gun.

The American sagged into the seat, unbelieving. After two hours of hell, he was alive. He floundered in the seat for a second, getting his feet underneath him, then began the climb out of the driver's door above him, a smile plastered on his face. He jerked the door handle, finding it unable to open, but the window through it was shattered and clear. He clawed his way past the body of the Arab, struggling to escape through the sliver of daylight, hearing shouting from the front.

He looked forward through the stars in the windshield and saw his savior screaming at him to stop. Confused, he simply grinned, and continued on. The man shouted again, now frantically waving his arms. He paused, wondering what was causing the concern. He looked down, and saw his foot on the small cigarette box. An innocuous thing, held in the hand of the dead Arab. He lifted his foot, and the box fell out, a long, long drop to the other side of the vehicle.

The last thing his mortal life experienced was a flash of light. No heat, although his body was consumed in fire a millisecond later.

Users Review

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