



Front Burner: Al Qaeda's Attack on the USS Cole

Kirk Lippold

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On October 12, 2000, eleven months before the 9/11 attacks, the USS *Cole* docked in the port of Aden in Yemen for a routine fueling stop. At 1118, on a hot, sunny morning, the 8,400-ton destroyer was rocked by an enormous explosion. The ship's commander, Kirk Lippold, felt the ship violently thrust up and to the right, as everything not bolted down seemed to float in midair. Tiles tumbled from the ceiling, and the ship was plunged into darkness, beginning to sink. In a matter of moments Lippold knew that the *Cole* had been attacked. What he didn't know was how much the world was changing around him.

The bombing of the *Cole* was al Qaeda's first direct assault against the United States and expanded their brazen and deadly string of terrorist attacks throughout the Middle East. In this gripping first-person narrative, Lippold reveals the details of this harrowing experience leading his crew of valiant sailors through the attack and its aftermath. Seventeen sailors died in the explosion and thirty-seven were wounded—but thanks to the valor of the crew in the perilous days that followed, the ship was saved.

Yet even with al Qaeda's intentions made clear in an unmistakable act of war, the United States government delayed retaliating. Bureaucrats and politicians sought to shift and pin blame as they ignored the danger signaled by the attack, shirking responsibility until the event was ultimately overshadowed by 9/11.

Front Burner captures a critical moment in America's battle against al Qaeda, telling a vital story that has—until now—been lost in the fog of the war on terror.

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