



# The Taliban Shuffle: Strange Days in Afghanistan and Pakistan

By Kim Barker

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**Now a Major Motion Picture titled *Whiskey Tango Foxtrot* starring Tina Fey, Margot Robbie, Martin Freeman, Alfred Molina, and Billy Bob Thornton.**

When Kim Barker first arrived in Kabul as a journalist in 2002, she barely owned a passport, spoke only English and had little idea how to do the “Taliban Shuffle” between Afghanistan and Pakistan. No matter—her stories about Islamic militants and shaky reconstruction were soon overshadowed by the bigger news in Iraq. But as she delved deeper into Pakistan and Afghanistan, her love for the hapless countries grew, along with her fear for their future stability. In this darkly comic and unsparing memoir, Barker uses her wry, incisive voice to expose the absurdities and tragedies of the “forgotten war,” finding humor and humanity amid the rubble and heartbreak.

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**The Taliban Shuffle: Strange Days in Afghanistan and Pakistan** By Kim Barker **Bibliography**

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### Editorial Review

#### Amazon.com Review

Kim Barker was *The Chicago Tribune*'s South Asia Bureau Chief from 2004 to 2009, much of which she spent living in and reporting from Afghanistan and Pakistan. *The Taliban Shuffle* comprises her recollections of these years, but make no mistake: this is not your parents' war correspondent's memoir. In fact, to hear this charismatic debut author tell of life in war-torn Kabul during these years, you'd think it was a more-or-less non-stop party. Journalism is famously known as a business for which "if it bleeds, it leads," and with a fresh war raging in Iraq, Barker initially faced long stretches of relative quiet. As a result, an absurd, often promiscuous subculture grew up among her fellow reporters. (Think *M\*A\*S\*H* with a dash of *Catch-22*.) Of course, it wasn't all fun, games, and the occasional heavy petting. Barker's reporting eventually brings her into contact with warlords, fundamentalists, and drug kingpins, and she does get blood on her hands (quite literally). As the action heats up and the Taliban begins slowly to regroup, she finds herself reporting on and fending off a host of unsavory types, from anonymous gropers in crowded streets to former Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, who woos her shamelessly, breaking all manner of internationally recognized rules of professional decorum. After five years of these "Strange Days in Afghanistan and Pakistan," Barker finally returns to the States with a one-of-a-kind memoir, a true story that's rife with both black humor and brutal honesty about the absurdities of war. --*Jason Kirk*

#### From Booklist

War correspondent Barker first started reporting from Afghanistan in 2003, when the war there was lazy and insignificant. She was just learning to navigate Afghan culture, one caught between warring factions, and struggling to get space in her newspaper, the *Chicago Tribune*. Lulled into complacency, everyone from the U.S. military to the Afghan diplomatic corps to the Pakistani government stumbled as the Taliban regrouped. Very frank and honest, Barker admits a host of mistakes, including gross cultural ignorance that often put her in danger even as she found Afghanistan similar in some ways to Montana, her home state, what with ?bearded men in pickup trucks stocked with guns and hate for the government.? She reports a string of characters: an amorous Pakistani former prime minister, a flashy Afghan American diplomat, an assortment of warlords, drug lords, fundamentalists, politicians, and fellow correspondents struck by wanderlust and plagued by messy personal lives?all of them against a backdrop of declining war coverage in declining American newspapers. A personal, insightful look at covering an ambivalent war in a complicated region. --  
Vanessa Bush

#### Review

"Remarkable. . . . [Barker] has written an account of her experiences covering Afghanistan and Pakistan that manages to be hilarious and harrowing, witty and illuminating, all at the same time." —Michiko Kakutani, *The New York Times*

"*The Taliban Shuffle* isn't like any other book out there about Afghanistan and Pakistan. It's witty, brilliant, and impossible to put down." —Rajiv Chandrasekaran, author of *Imperial Life in the Emerald City*

"*The Taliban Shuffle* is part war memoir, part tale of self-discovery that, thanks to Barker's biting honesty and wry wit, manages to be both hilarious and heartbreaking." —*Chicago Tribune*

"What you'd hear if the reporter never turned off the voice recorder between interviews—brilliant firsthand

outtakes that wind up telling us more about the Afghan debacle than any foreign policy briefing.” —*The Seattle Times*

“At once funny and harrowing, insightful and appalling. . . . *The Taliban Shuffle* will pull you in so deep that you’ll smell the poppies and quake from the bombs.” —*The Minneapolis Star Tribune*

“If you’re looking for a window on the challenges facing Afghanistan and Pakistan today—from a resurgent Taliban to American incompetence to Afghan and Pakistani corruption and nepotism—Barker provides a sterling vantage point.” —*San Francisco Chronicle*

“Kim Barker gives a true and amusing picture of hellholes and the reporters on assignment in them. But she breaks the journo code of silence and reveals a trade secret of the hacks who cover hellholes: The hell of the holes is that they’re kind of fun.” —P. J. O’Rourke

“*The Taliban Shuffle* gives us an insider’s perspective of Afghanistan and Pakistan—their fascinating cultures, unstable governments, and burgeoning terrorist groups. . . . With dark, self-deprecating humor and shrewd insight, Barker chronicles her experiences as a rookie foreign reporter and the critical years when the Taliban resurged amidst the collapse of the Afghan and Pakistani governments.” —*The Daily Beast*

“Politically astute and clearly influenced by Hunter S. Thompson, Barker provides sharp commentary on the impotence of American foreign policy in South Asia after the victory against the Taliban. . . . Fierce, funny and unflinchingly honest.” —*Kirkus Reviews*

“Reveals many enduring truths. . . . Novel both for its humor and for its perspective . . . it rises (or sinks) to levels of seriousness that will be remembered long after the po-faced analysis of other writers has been forgotten.” —*The National*

“Brilliant, tender, and unexpectedly hilarious.” —*Marie Claire*

“Candid and darkly comic. . . . With self-deprecation and a keen eye for the absurd, Barker describes her evolution from a green, fill-in correspondent to an adrenaline junkie.” —*Publisher’s Weekly*

“*The Taliban Shuffle* is *Scoop* meets *Dispatches*, remixed with a twenty-first-century Bollywood soundtrack. Laugh-out-loud funny, it is the true story of what it is like to be a female journalist in one of the world’s most exotic war zones, while telling the reader much about what is really going on today in Afghanistan and Pakistan.” —Peter Bergen, author of *The Longest War: The Enduring Conflict between America and Al-Qaeda*

“[An] immensely entertaining memoir.” —*The Boston Globe*

“Yes, there are bombs. And there is carnage. And all sorts of mayhem. But mostly there are people, human beings even, with appetites—for life, for adventure, for riches, for love. Ms. Barker offers this world—the human world caught in the crosshairs of history—with a vitality rarely seen in accounts of the war. A compelling read that offers readers a glimpse of the goings-on behind the byline.” —J. Maarten Troost, author of *The Sex Lives of Cannibals*

## **Users Review**

### **From reader reviews:**

#### **Nicholas Hess:**

The book The Taliban Shuffle: Strange Days in Afghanistan and Pakistan make one feel enjoy for your spare time. You need to use to make your capable much more increase. Book can to get your best friend when you getting tension or having big problem with the subject. If you can make looking at a book The Taliban Shuffle: Strange Days in Afghanistan and Pakistan to get your habit, you can get far more advantages, like add your current capable, increase your knowledge about a number of or all subjects. You may know everything if you like wide open and read a e-book The Taliban Shuffle: Strange Days in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Kinds of book are a lot of. It means that, science e-book or encyclopedia or other folks. So , how do you think about this book?

#### **Thomas Smith:**

The particular book The Taliban Shuffle: Strange Days in Afghanistan and Pakistan has a lot details on it. So when you make sure to read this book you can get a lot of benefit. The book was published by the very famous author. The writer makes some research prior to write this book. That book very easy to read you may get the point easily after reading this article book.

#### **Bobbi Gonzales:**

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