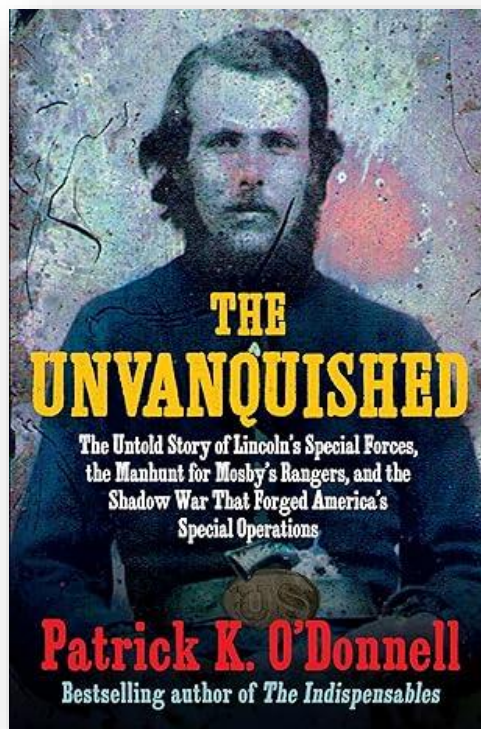




*The Unvanquished By Patrick K. O'Donnell Atlantic Monthly
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Patrick K. O'Donnell's *The Unvanquished: The Untold Story of Lincoln's Special Forces, the Manhunt for Mosby's Rangers, and the Shadow War That Forged America's Special Operations* is his thirteenth published book. In it, O'Donnell recounts Union intelligence gathering during the American Civil War and the covert actions between the Jessie Scouts (Union) and Mosby's Rangers (Confederate). Books about the American Civil War are ample, reflecting the enduring interest in the nation's bloodiest conflict. However, O'Donnell sheds new light on a story of soldiers building a network of intelligence gathering systems and the manhunt for some of the most dangerous Confederate operators. Readers will find value in O'Donnell's book from the deeply researched biographies of soldiers and the movement of Union Scouts and Confederate Rangers, which included various biographies such as Richard Blazer, General Sheridan, and John Singleton Mosby, as well as other lesser-known American soldiers throughout *The Unvanquished*. Chapter management was on point; the page count was over 350, but the chapters were seamless, making reading easy to pick up and continue. Maps were provided throughout the book as appropriate.

The American Civil War is as much about people as it is about places. Much of O'Donnell's book is set in the Shenandoah Valley, with additional scenes in Washington, DC, and Richmond. Additionally, O'Donnell explores how the Confederate Rangers were financed. The ability to sustain confederate operations financially has always been a fascinating aspect, which O'Donnell added depth to with *The Unvanquished*. The book highlights many historic origins, including Jessie Ann Benton Fremont, the daughter of a US Senator, and the wife of General John Charles Fremont¹. General Fremont is credited with organizing specialized groups of operators called Jessie Scouts, named after his wife. These Scouts, skilled in guerrilla warfare, were from the American West. Jessie was added to their name to distinguish them from the regular army. These Scouts even developed their own code to identify themselves in the field. O'Donnell's main theme throughout the book is the nature of unconventional warfare and intelligence gathering tactics, unique to the American Civil War experience.

Violence in the American Civil War is one theme O'Donnell focuses on in *The Unvanquished*. Intelligence gathering of troop strength, positions, and infiltrations, as well as the kidnapping of Union Flag officers and deliberate destruction of civilian infrastructure, were noticeable themes. The destruction of trains and rail lines as key

targets for both Jessie Scouts and Rangers was also mentioned. However, to be fair, both sides participated in the destruction of civilian infrastructure. Another theme of O'Donnell's book was the unchecked escalations of violence of both Union and Confederate forces.

The *Unvanquished* serves as a valuable source for understanding historical personalities. John Singleton Mosby, the main protagonist of O'Donnell's book, has been the subject of extensive scholarship, including his own memoirs of service regarding his actions during the American Civil War. O'Donnell's contribution lies in tracing Mosby's movements in detail and situating his actions within the broader context of the raids, counterraid and subsequent manhunt that developed during the conflict. Throughout other American Civil War literature, Captain Richard Blazer from Ohio was an under-researched contributor to the development of special operations and irregular warfare for the Union Army, specifically the Jessie Scouts. Here, O'Donnell's detailed research adds depth and breadth to our understanding of the historic role that soldiers such as Blazer and others contributed to our knowledge. Similarly, to Mosby, General Robert E. Lee, General Philip Sheridan, and General Jubal Early's actions were covered extensively in other literature, yet the writing style, research, and context that O'Donnell executed deliver new insight as it pertains to special operations during the American Civil War.

Acts of counterinsurgency, such as raids vital for intelligence gathering activities for both Jessie Scouts (Union) and Rangers (Confederate), were an integral aspect of O'Donnell's work. The *Unvanquished* provides examples of the kidnapping of high-ranking officers and sabotage on rail lines. Both Union and Confederate forces relied on rail lines for supplies throughout the war. One such raid that was covered in great detail was The Greenback Raid in 1864. Led by Mosby himself with 80 Rangers, the raid took place at Duffield's Depot located in Charlestown, West Virginia. O'Donnell's book highlights the goal of the raid to derail the train and torch the remainder of the train. O'Donnell does an excellent job of also discussing the short-term and long-term effects from the raid, including political optics from losing a large sum of money totaling \$168,000 from Union paymasters that were on the train, and the diluting force by reallocation of Union soldiers to guard communications and supply lines. The *Unvanquished* included details regarding the need for Union soldiers to guard supplies and communication lines, which further diluted their fighting strength. The fallout from

the Greenback Raid and other acts of sabotage on supply lines by Mosby were a textbook example of guerrilla tactics and irregular warfare during the American Civil War.

O'Donnell's book covers different geographical areas with detail, such as the Shenandoah Valley and its battle space, as well as the siege of both Washington DC and Richmond. Additionally, O'Donnell discusses some interesting Confederate clandestine meetings in high society hotels in Canada, political assassination plots with payments in gold, an alleged plot to kidnap President Lincoln, and finally the end of the Mosby Rangers and the last stand for the US Jessie Scouts in Mexico.

Patrick K O'Donnell delivers a unique book on irregular operations and warfare during the American Civil War, which previous books only covered in general terms. O'Donnell's book is a fine addition to any general reader's collection of the American Civil War, as well as scholars interested in military history, intelligence, and special operations. Similarly, O'Donnell's book fits on the same bookshelves as Counterinsurgency Theory and Reality by Whittingham and Mitchell. The actions of soldiers such as Blazer and his role in tracking down Mosby and other Confederate Rangers were a long overdue addition to American Civil War history. The Unvanquished is a story of special operations during the American Civil War, which combined Union and Confederate forces in the perpetual escalation of blood and violence during the final years of the American Civil War, highlighting the irregular warfare from the operational viewpoint of the Jessie Scouts.

David Retherford has an undergraduate degree from the University of Florida and two master's degrees from Birmingham University (UK). David's research focuses on American intelligence during the First World War.