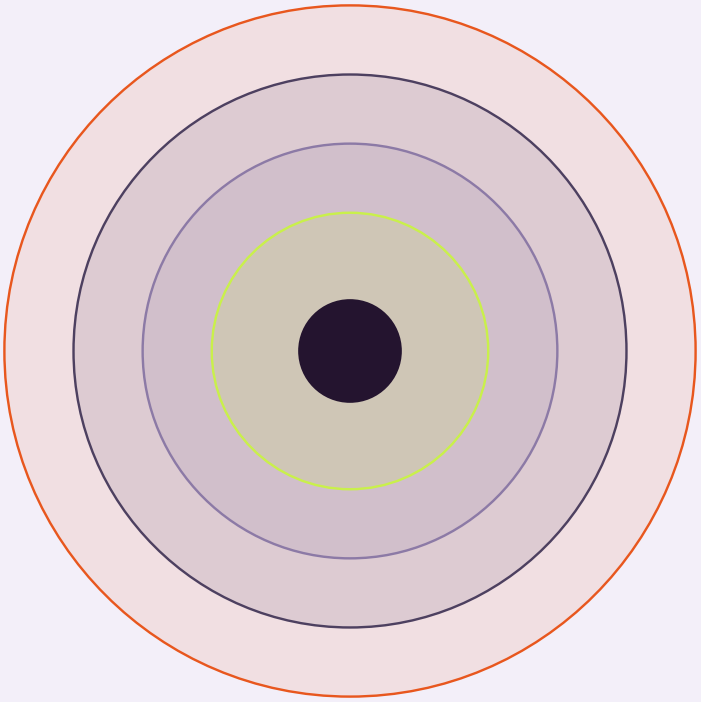


Into the Breach: A Soldier's Journey

A reading of the book by Wayne Eyre (2026)

1. ACTION BOOK

CONTENTS

Inside this edition

The book in a minute 3

The takeaways 4

Your action book 6

Before you go 7

PART TWO · THE ACTION BOOK

The setup checklist 9

Hold a weekly readiness check 10

Keep a short field journal 11

Say the hard thing in the first meeting 12

ABOUT THIS EDITION

This is HourLife's reading of Into the Breach: A Soldier's Journey, in our own words. It is not a substitute for the book.

BEFORE YOU START 01

The book in a minute

Wayne Eyre served in the Canadian Armed Forces for four decades and was Chief of the Defence Staff, Canada's top military officer, from 2021 until he retired in 2024. Into the Breach is his memoir. The early parts follow him from a Saskatchewan farm and the army cadets to peacekeeping in Cyprus, Croatia and Bosnia, including the 1993 battle at the Medak Pocket, and then to Afghanistan, where he led Canadian soldiers who mentored and fought beside Afghan troops. The later parts cover his years at the top: a crisis over misconduct by senior leaders, the pandemic, the evacuation from Afghanistan, the convoy occupation of Ottawa and the war in Ukraine. His argument is that Canada keeps leaning on capable, can-do soldiers while failing to give them the people, equipment and direction their missions need, and that the old peacekeeping model belongs to a world that is gone. He closes with a case for a larger force, stronger alliances and faster procurement.

Below are the 9 ideas HourLife readers vote up most, each in our words with a note on what it asks of you, and then the steps that put them to work.

WHAT READERS KEEP

The takeaways

1 HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

Pick people for character first, because skill can be taught and character rarely can.

Eyre's leadership rule is that character leads and competence follows. He backs it with cases from junior leaders under fire to misconduct at the very top, and he admits there were times he missed the warning signs himself. The order matters: a capable person with poor character does the most damage.

2 HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

A can-do team can hide a plan nobody paid for.

The book's central complaint is that Canada keeps relying on soldiers who make things work while failing to give them enough people, equipment and direction. That willingness is a real strength. It also lets the people in charge keep adding missions without funding them, and the bill arrives later as worn-out units and gaps in readiness.

3 HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

Peacekeeping that depends on consent stops working the moment one side respects only force.

At the Medak Pocket in Croatia in 1993, Eyre was a young captain with the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry. Canadian troops came under artillery and machine-gun fire, held, and then found evidence of ethnic cleansing in the villages beyond. He treats that battle as the end of the old idea of UN peacekeeping, and argues Canada should stop telling itself it is a nation of peacekeepers.

4 HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

Influence, information and patient talk can move a problem that force cannot.

In Drvar in Bosnia, the removal of a Bosnian Croat brigade from the town came through intelligence, negotiation and pressure rather than shooting. It sits in the book as the counterweight to Medak: knowing when force is needed, and when it would only make things worse.

5 HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

You cannot bolt your own structures onto someone else's institutions and expect them to hold.

In Afghanistan Eyre led Canadian soldiers who mentored Afghan army units and went into combat alongside them. He describes thin staffing, tangled coalition command, corruption and Western systems imposed on Afghan ones. The doubts he recorded about the Afghan army's cohesion read differently after its collapse.

6 HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

Crises do not take turns, so plan for several at once.

His years as Chief of the Defence Staff stacked the pandemic, the evacuation from Afghanistan, the war in Ukraine, the convoy occupation of Ottawa, Haiti, and floods and fires at home. Each was a fair call on the same small force. The lesson is about load: the number of things you can do well at once is smaller than the number you are asked to do.

7 HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

Give your most candid advice, then accept that the decision belongs to someone else.

Eyre calls the link between the top soldier and elected leaders an unequal dialogue. The officer owes frank advice, including bad news about readiness, and the government decides. He writes about being pressed to soften his warnings and about weighing whether to resign on principle, and about why he stayed.

8 HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

When you inherit a crisis, listen and learn before you act.

He took the top job as acting chief after allegations against senior leaders had shaken trust in the institution. His approach was a sequence he named Listen, Learn, Act. Reform followed, including a new organisation for professional conduct and culture, and he is open about calls he got wrong along the way.

9 HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

Readiness is a standing habit, not a reaction to the last emergency.

The final parts of the book move from memoir to warning. Eyre argues that the order built after the Second World War is wearing away and that the Arctic no longer keeps Canada safe by distance. His prescription is stronger partnerships, faster procurement and a much larger force, and above all treating preparation as continuous work.

PUT IT TO WORK

Your action book

Do the setup steps once, then keep the habits going. The setup changes your week; the habits keep it changed after the first good one.

The download puts this whole reading and a printable action book in one PDF: the setup checklist, then a page of real calendar days for each habit, starting on the day you choose.

SET UP ONCE

- [ ] List every mission you have said yes to
- [ ] Put your real hours against them
- [ ] Write a candid brief for whoever sets your load
- [ ] Decide what character you will check for
- [ ] Start your next new role with a listening week

KEEP UP DAILY

- ◯ Hold a weekly readiness check
- ◯ Keep a short field journal
- ◯ Say the hard thing in the first meeting

30 days · Nov 6 - Dec 5, 2026

Part two, after the reading, prints each of these as a page to fill in by hand.

THE LAST WORD

Before you go

Pick one step from the action book and do it today. An idea from a book starts to count once it changes what one ordinary day looks like.

PART TWO

The action book

Change the setup once, then keep it up. 5 setup actions to do once, and 3 habits to mark each day for 30 days.

Nov 6 - Dec 5, 2026

Print it, or write on it in any PDF app.

SET UP ONCE

The setup checklist

Each of these is done once. Do one a day, and check it off when it is done.

- [ ] SETUP 1

List every mission you have said yes to

Write down every ongoing commitment: work projects, family duties, volunteering, side projects.

Next to each, put the hours a week it really takes, not the hours you hoped it would.

MY VERSION

DONE ON

- [ ] SETUP 2

Put your real hours against them

Count the hours you actually have in a normal week and compare the two totals.

If the missions need more, name the gap in hours instead of hoping extra effort will cover it.

MY VERSION

DONE ON

- [ ] SETUP 3

Write a candid brief for whoever sets your load

One page for your manager, partner or board: what you have, what is asked, what will slip, and two or three options.

Hand it over and let them make the call.

MY VERSION

DONE ON

- [ ] SETUP 4

Decide what character you will check for

Before your next hire, team pick or volunteer lead, write down two traits of character you will look for and how you will check them, such as how they treat people who have no power over them.

MY VERSION

DONE ON

- [ ] SETUP 5

Start your next new role with a listening week

When you take over a team or a project, spend the first week asking questions and taking notes before changing anything.

Write down what you learned before your first real decision.

MY VERSION

DONE ON

DAILY HABIT 1 OF 3

Hold a weekly readiness check

Fifteen minutes each Friday: what is due next week, whether you have the time, tools and people for it, and what needs raising now rather than after it fails.

Nov 6 - Dec 5, 2026 · 30 days · circle each day you do it

SMALLEST VERSION

CUE

WHERE

November 2026

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
						1
2	3	4	5	6 ○	7 ○	8 ○
9 ○	10 ○	11 ○	12 ○	13 ○	14 ○	15 ○
16 ○	17 ○	18 ○	19 ○	20 ○	21 ○	22 ○
23 ○	24 ○	25 ○	26 ○	27 ○	28 ○	29 ○
30 ○						

December 2026

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
	1 ○	2 ○	3 ○	4 ○	5 ○	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			

EACH FRIDAY

WHAT HELPED

WHAT GOT IN THE WAY

ONE CHANGE TO THE SETUP

DAILY HABIT 2 OF 3

Keep a short field journal

A few lines a day on what you decided and why.

Nov 6 - Dec 5, 2026 · 30 days · circle each day you do it

SMALLEST VERSION

CUE

WHERE

November 2026

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
						1
2	3	4	5	6 ○	7 ○	8 ○
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EACH FRIDAY

WHAT HELPED

WHAT GOT IN THE WAY

ONE CHANGE TO THE SETUP

DAILY HABIT 3 OF 3

Say the hard thing in the first meeting

When a plan will not work with what it has been given, say so early and with numbers.

Nov 6 - Dec 5, 2026 · 30 days · circle each day you do it

SMALLEST VERSION

CUE

WHERE

November 2026

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
						1
2	3	4	5	6 ○	7 ○	8 ○
9 ○	10 ○	11 ○	12 ○	13 ○	14 ○	15 ○
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December 2026

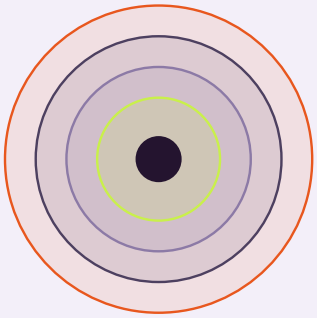
MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
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EACH FRIDAY

WHAT HELPED

WHAT GOT IN THE WAY

ONE CHANGE TO THE SETUP



Capable people can cover a gap for a long time. Being ready means closing it before they have to.

HOURLIFE NOTE AFTER WAYNE EYRE