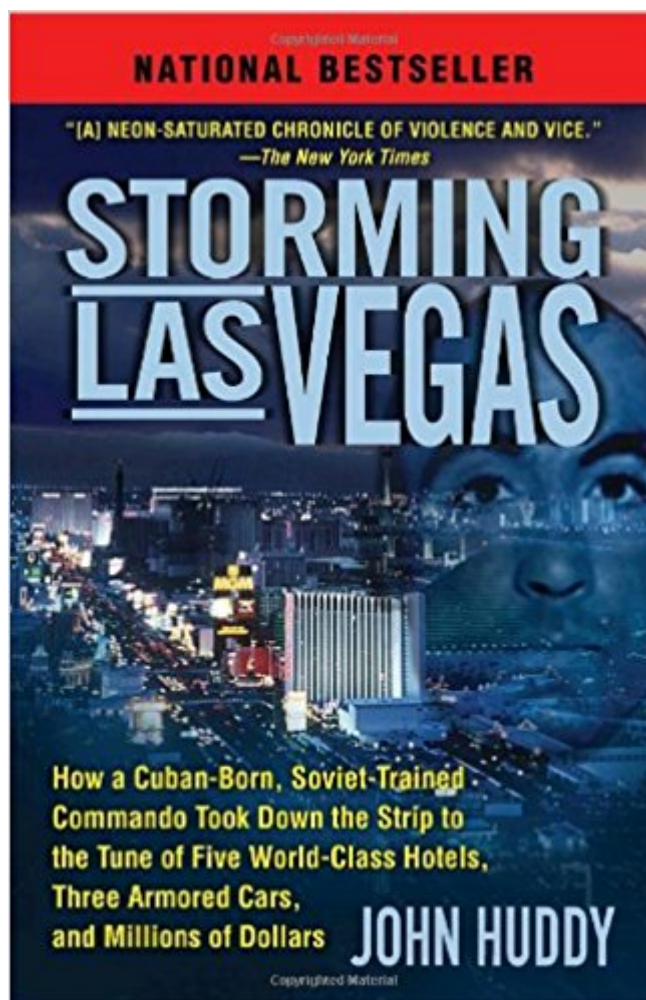


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# Storming Las Vegas: How A Cuban-Born, Soviet-Trained Commando Took Down The Strip To The Tune Of Five World-Class Hotels, Three Armored Cars, And Millions Of Dollars





## Synopsis

On September 20, 1998, Jose Vigoa, a child of Fidel Castro's revolution, launched what would be the most audacious and ruthless series of high-profile casino and armored car robberies that Las Vegas had ever seen. In a brazen sixteen-month reign of terror, he and his crew would hit the crème de la crème of Vegas hotels: the MGM, the Desert Inn, the New York-New York, the Mandalay Bay, and the Bellagio. The robberies were well planned and executed, and the police "the stupid," as Vigoa contemptuously referred to them, were all but helpless to stop them. But Lt. John Alamshaw, the twenty-three-year veteran in charge of robbery detectives, was not giving up so easily. For him, Vigoa's rampage was a personal affront. And he would do whatever it took, even risk his badge, to bring Vigoa down.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Starred Review. Network producer and onetime Miami Herald columnist Huddy tells a gripping story of greed, violence, theft and public relations. Las Vegas had just launched its new blitz of advertising—advancing itself not as Sin City but as a family-friendly vacation destination—when Jose Vigoa (a Cuban-born commando veteran of the Soviet Army) hit town in the late 1990s. Vigoa and a small crew embarked on a violent 16-month crime wave, targeting some of the Strip's most prominent (and, as Vigoa showed, vulnerable) institutions. A 23-year veteran of the Las Vegas Police Force, Lt. John Alamshaw was charged with finding and capturing the men behind the crime spree—without allowing the robberies to become

national news and spoil Vegas's new image. Huddy traces Vigoa's personal history from his childhood in Castro's Cuba to fighting for the Red Army in Afghanistan, his return to Cuba and eventual resettlement in the United States. Then he chronicles the Cuban's increasingly audacious grabs for Vegas riches and his ultimate sentencing to more than 500 years in prison with no possibility of parole. This debut is a must for true-crime enthusiasts. B&w photos. (Feb. 19)

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--This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

"An amazing and absorbing story . . . [John] Huddy's vivid, visceral prose and lean narrative make reading about this episode of extreme criminal violence much more than a guilty pleasure." —Miami Herald  
"Harrowing . . . Storming Las Vegas showcases Mr. Huddy's fine reporting and deft storytelling skill." —Wall Street Journal  
"A gripping story of greed, violence, theft and public relations . . . a must for true-crime enthusiasts." —Publishers Weekly, starred review  
"Revealing in what it shows about the criminal mind . . . [Huddy has] the perfect blend of skills and experience to tell the story of Vigoa." —Seattle Times  
"A total page-turner . . . riveting from beginning to end." —Laura Ingraham, The O'Reilly Factor  
"A thought-provoking, demented Horatio Alger story." —Entertainment Weekly

Hard to believe this the events documented in this story actually occurred in modern times and in the US. I know Las Vegas well and many of the descriptions of locations in this book intrigued me. What this book showed in many ways is that the police are often nothing more than lucky to solve certain crimes. A real professional criminal is capable of pulling off a lot. Jose Vigoa was an expert at that. He had the training and skills to pull off serious crimes. On the side he attempted to live a normal life and was a family man. He focused his energy in the wrong direction. I am convinced the he really enjoyed being the criminal that he was. For him it was more about the thrills than the money. He was willing to completely disregard the impact that his crimes would have on other people in order to satisfy his desire for these thrills. Overall this is a very interesting story. This is not be best written book ever, but the story makes it worth the read.

Overall, I really liked this book. Vigoa is a really interesting person and it is amazing that his crime spree could continue unchecked for so long in the modern day. Additionally, the story appears to have some careful research done so you get the backstory and real facts. However, the writing style

switches back and forth between past and present almost at random. Sometimes this works pretty well, almost as if you are listening to a sports announcer going over the unfolding play. Othertimes it doesn't work so well and you suddenly realize you are not exactly sure why some small part of the story is being told. Also, the book does not unfold entirely chronologically. It opens with a stunning scene of a gunbattle that actually takes place much later in the book. Then as things go on, you see how Vigoa got to that part. But later in the book, some heists get almost no mention at all and others just pop up without warning. I'd certainly recommend the book despite the somewhat strange writing style as the story is fascinating.

To be fair, John Huddy had somewhat of a slam-dunk on his hands with this under-told story. Even so, his writing and thoughtfulness took it to a level it wouldn't have reached in less capable hands. Huddy, a former police and crime beat reporter found an amazing story that had been downplayed by casinos and Las Vegas papers because of the potential for negative impact on their business. For a little longer than 24 months at the end of the 1990s and beginning of the 2000s, several Las Vegas armored cars and big-time casinos were robbed in a manner that was clearly planned by someone with a knowledge of weapons and tactics well beyond that of the average criminal. Furthermore, they were bold - done right on the strip in broad daylight. Huddy tells the story of these heists and the law enforcement effort to solve them in a gripping, nearly fiction-like narrative style that keeps you almost frantic to find out what happens next. To achieve this effect, Huddy has spent an obviously huge amount of time researching the story first-hand, talking at length with those who were involved. The finished product is the tale of a man born in Cuba and trained by the Soviet military who ends up in the United States under questionable circumstances and turns to his military training to earn an illicit living in Sin City. In this case, truth truly is stranger than fiction. Huddy deserves credit for painting an even-handed portrait of the men who committed and solved the crimes, resisting the urge to just give in to stereotyping. Beyond that, Huddy finishes with a thoughtful analysis of who our Cuban anti-hero might truly be, and who he might not be. All in all, Huddy has found a great story and done it full justice with his treatment. Highly recommended for anyone who likes non-fiction crime stories. An action-packed descendant of "In Cold Blood", by Truman Capote.

Credit must be given to the publisher of this book because the marketing of this book is superb. Cuban commando! Vegas robberies! Crime of a Lifetime! This kind of marketing would cause anyone interested in Vegas to be intrigued about this story - and candidly, it worked. I picked up the

book on a Sunday morning in McCarran Airport in Vegas and was very excited to read it. Unfortunately, the actual story does not come remotely close to the promise of the cover. For starters, the book is way too long (by at least 150 pages). I compliment the author for his passion but this story simply did not need the in-detail coverage of the life history of almost every person involved in the story (e.g. pages on the bio of a Brinks Security guard in one of those robberies). This should have been a 200 page book at MOST (not 350 pgs). Second, the actual robberies are not that exciting. The main villain essentially walks into casinos, pulls out guns and robs the cages...or robs the security guards transporting the money through the casinos. The raids are daring but they are not too complicated. The author also goes on way too long about each robbery and the writing is fairly choppy, which makes it tough to always follow the story. Finally, the main villain has interesting history but in the end, is simply a lunatic and a thug. He isn't some sort of brilliant criminal, which the author tries to suggest. In all, sadly, this is a typical Vegas book - lot of hype, little substance, and a post-reading feeling of "man, I wish that cover hadn't sucked me in."

Armed car robberies, Russian special forces training, drug dealer and insecure child from poverty in Cuba. Very interesting story of a very unique individual. The book is well crafted and expertly written.

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