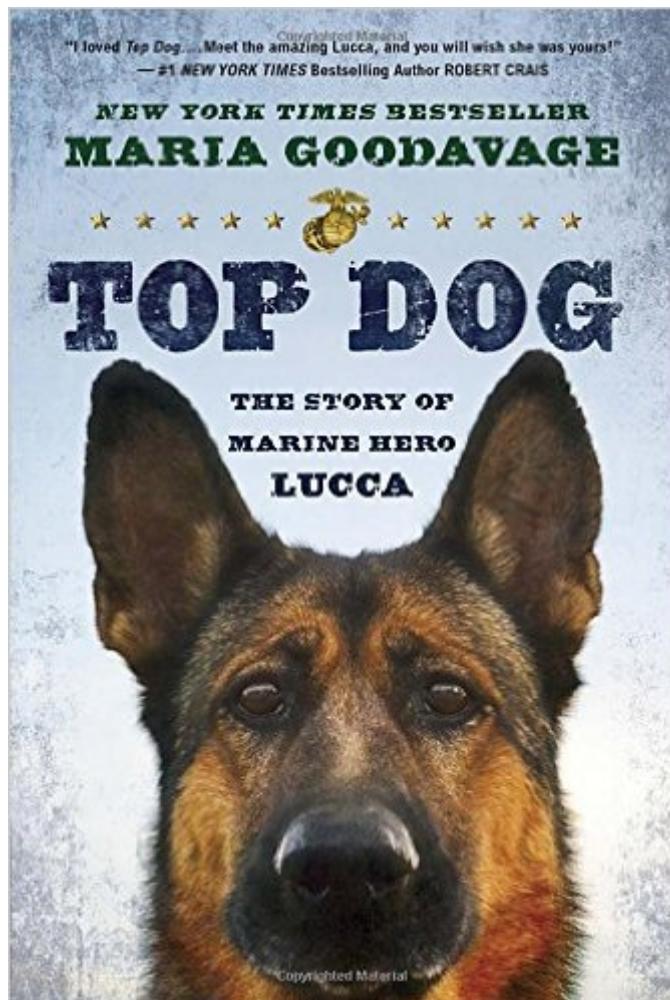


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# Top Dog: The Story Of Marine Hero Lucca



## Synopsis

The New York Times bestselling author of *Soldier Dogs* delivers the incredible, true story of K-9 Marine hero Lucca, and the handlers who fought alongside her through two bloody wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Maria Goodavage takes readers into the life of Lucca K458, a decorated and highly skilled military working dog. An extraordinary bond develops between Lucca and Marine Corps dog handlers Chris Willingham and Juan Rodriguez, in what would become a legendary 400-mission career. A specialized search dog, Lucca belongs to an elite group trained to work off-leash at long distances from her handler to sniff out deadly explosives. She served alongside both Special Forces and regular infantry, and became so sought-after that platoons frequently requested her by name. Here, in gritty detail, is the gripping account of Lucca's adventures on and off the battlefields, including tense, lifesaving explosives finds and rooftop firefights, as well as the bravery of fellow handlers and dogs they served with. Ultimately we see how the bond between Lucca and her handlers overcame the endless brutalities of war and the traumas such violence can inflict. *Top Dog* is a portrait of modern warfare with a heartwarming and inspiring conclusion that will touch dog lovers and the toughest military readers.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

It seems fitting that this review of *Top Dog* (Luccaâ™s story) coordinate with Veteranâ™s Day. After all, Lucca and her handlers, Willingham and Rodriguez, are heroes worth honoring. I first learned of NY Times bestselling author Maria Goodavage because of my love for dogs (as she used to run Dogster.com). We chatted a few times by email. Not only had I written a dog-themed

devotional and a series of dog rescue stories, but I was working on a novel whose protagonist was a former Marine turned single mom who was beginning a contract military working dog and police dog training business. Goodavageâ™s first book, *Soldier Dogs*, was a must read for me and not only did I find it riveting, it also solidified some of my research and knowledge about military working dogs. So, when she announced the release of *Top Dog*, I knew I had to read it, too. And Iâ™m so glad I did. *Top Dog* is the story of Lucca, a four-legged warrior. Lucca is a German shepherd-Belgian Malinois mix who is partnered with Marine Staff Sergeant Chris Willingham. Their attachment goes soul-deep from training to the trenches. The two are inseparable and work in tandem amid the dangers of battle, trying with all their resources to save lives and knowing not every effort will have a successful outcome. Goodavageâ™s writing connects us immediately with Willingham and Lucca. We feel the camaraderie between them. It beats like one heart as the two move through one adventure after another during two deployments. When Goodavage takes us into combat with them, the inherent danger and tension are tooth-grinding. Thankfully, she intersperses the reality of battle with brief respites of praise, recognition and fun. Never do we doubt Willinghamâ™s commitment nor Luccaâ™s loyalty, obedience and drive to please.

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