



The CIA at War: Inside the Secret Campaign Against Terror

By Ronald Kessler

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With the CIA at the core of the war on terror, no agency is as important to preserving America's freedom. Yet the CIA is a closed and secretive world-impenetrable to generations of journalists-and few Americans know what really goes on among the spy masters who plot America's worldwide campaign against terrorists.

Only Ronald Kessler, an award-winning former *Washington Post* and *Wall Street Journal* investigative reporter, could have gained the unprecedented access to tell the story. Kessler interviewed fifty current CIA officers, including all the agency's top officials, and toured areas of the CIA the media has never seen. The agency actively encouraged retired CIA officers and officials to talk with him as well. In six years as director, George J. Tenet has never appeared on TV shows and has given only a handful of print interviews, all before 9/11, but Tenet agreed to be interviewed by Kessler for this book. He spoke candidly and passionately about the events of 9/11, the war on terror, the agency's intelligence on Iraq, and the controversies surrounding the agency.

The CIA at War tells the inside story of how Tenet, a son of Greek immigrants, turned around the CIA from a pathetic, risk averse outfit to one that has rolled up 3,000 terrorists since 9/11, was critically important to winning in Afghanistan and Iraq, and now kills terrorists with its Predator drone aircraft.

The book portrays Tenet as a true American hero, one who overcame every kind of Washington obstacle and the destructive actions of previous director John Deutch to make the agency a success. As Tenet said in a recent speech, "Nowhere in the world could the son of an immigrant stand before you as the director of Central Intelligence. This is simply the greatest country on the face of the earth."

The CIA at War discloses highly sensitive information about the CIA's unorthodox methods and its stunning successes and shocking failures. The book explores whether the CIA can be trusted, whether its intelligence is politicized, and whether it is capable of winning the war on terror. In doing so, the book

weaves in the history of the CIA and how it really works. It is the definitive account of the agency.

From the CIA's intelligence failure of 9/11 to its critical role in preventing further attacks, *The CIA at War* tells a riveting, unique story about a secretive, powerful agency and its confrontation with global terrorism.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

The war on terror is a sideshow to the larger struggle for the CIA's soul in this illuminating but partisan book. Investigative journalist Kessler gives a warts-and-all account of the CIA's checkered past up to the despondent 1990s, when the demise of Communism, official disparagement of human intelligence-gathering in favor of high-tech spying, and humiliations like the Aldrich Ames spy case, left the agency rudderless and demoralized. Kessler ties these lapses to a dysfunctional institutional culture that oscillated, he says, between paranoia and slackness, bureaucratic sclerosis and "cowboy" adventurism, and arrogant unaccountability and prissy human rights regulations. Kessler gives an absorbing and critical, if somewhat rambling, history of the agency and its problems, based on extensive interviews with past and present CIA officials and leavened with intriguing secret-agent lore. But when current CIA director George Tenet—a "gracious" and "politically savvy" leader whose "integrity and outspokenness" started a "healing process" that made the agency "focused, aggressive and effective"—arrives on the scene, Kessler's objectivity departs. He dismisses criticisms of the CIA's pre-Sept. 11 performance and the controversy over intelligence claims about Iraq (Tenet, he huffs, "would never tolerate any attempts to influence the CIA's conclusions"). Instead, Kessler extols the agency's successes in "rolling up" terrorists and laying the clandestine groundwork for the invasion of Iraq, while downplaying awkward loose threads like the failure to find the weapons of mass destruction the CIA insisted were in Iraq. Kessler's uncritical endorsement of Tenet—and of President Bush, another "focused" leader who "gets" intelligence, unlike the inattentive Clinton—lacks the insight displayed in the rest of the book. Photos.

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From Booklist

Kessler takes us from the formation of the CIA as an outgrowth of World War II OSS intelligence activities, when most agents were East Coast Ivy League elites focused on cold war scrimmages, through the current war on terror, where the enemy is often unknown and the agency elite are somewhat more diverse. Through numerous interviews with both agents and operatives, Kessler brings to life a world generally described only in fiction. While providing special insight into CIA successes associated with the post-9/11 war on terror, Kessler also portrays a demoralized agency that lost popular and political support because of its inability to detect traitors within its own ranks. This historically secretive and powerful agency has adjusted to modern warfare by integrating intelligence gathering with field operations. Kessler had unprecedented access to the agency, which is reflected in his up-to-date commentary on the war and administration policy. *Vernon Ford*
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Review

"Colorful and fascinating . . . Kessler's sobering report . . . will come as a surprise to most readers--and possibly even Washington insiders . . . Chilling." *?The Washington Post Book World*

"A compelling and timely exposition of the real FBI. Kessler's fresh information and command of the facts . . . rings with authority." *?The Los Angeles Times Book Review*

"An assiduous journalist, Kessler has written numerous books about behind-the-scenes stories at the national security agencies. His reportage on the abuse of office perks by ex-FBI director William Sessions, for example, precipitated Sessions' exit in 1993. His latest book is a history of the FBI since its origin in 1908

and is structured around directors' tenures . . . Kessler's access to reliable sources results in a richly detailed overview." *Gilbert Taylor, Booklist*

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