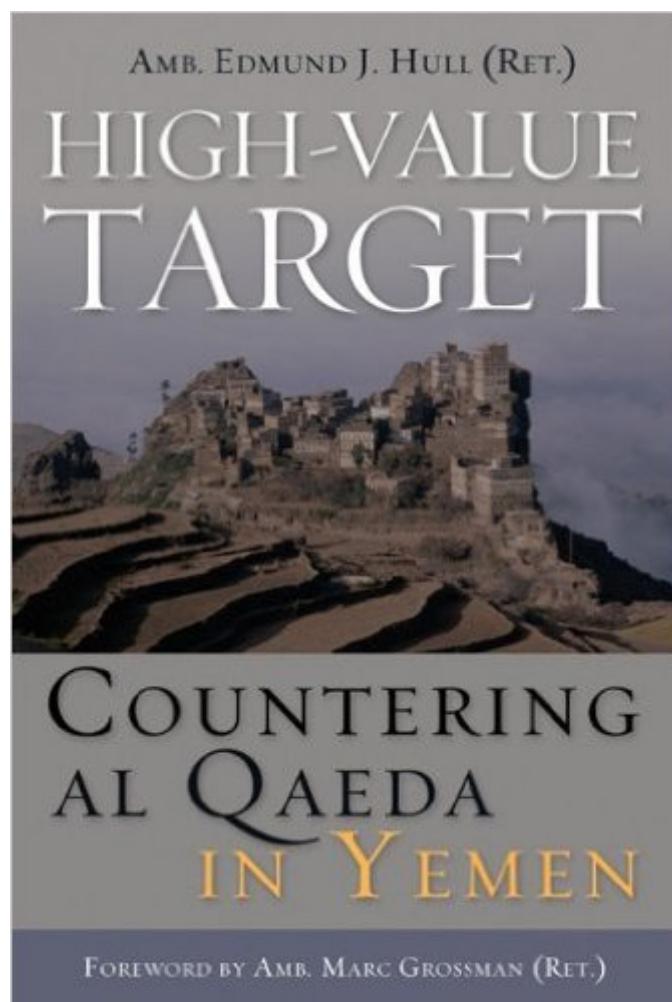


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# High-Value Target: Countering Al Qaeda In Yemen



## **Synopsis**

Since its inception, al Qaeda has aspired to create a safe haven in Yemen, where it has operated against U.S. and Yemeni interests. From 2001 to 2004, when Edmund J. Hull was the American ambassador to Yemen, U.S. and Yemeni counterterrorism efforts successfully seized the initiative against al Qaeda, severely degrading its capabilities. During this period, al Qaeda mounted no successful operations against U.S. interests in Yemen and suffered the loss of its top leadership and cadres. *High-Value Target* tells the inside story of how al Qaeda's Yemeni safe haven was disrupted during Hull's tenure. A top counterterrorism official in both the Clinton and Bush administrations, Hull provides a detailed account of a team effort to build a strategic basis for U.S.-Yemeni counterterrorism and to execute a broad strategy aimed at improving not only the security of Yemen but also its economic development. That strategy included launching successful strikes against al Qaeda's leadership; engaging in sustained, personal involvement in Yemen's remote tribal areas; and fostering Yemen's nascent democracy and civil society. Plagued by profound distrust, scarce resources, and constant threats, the U.S. diplomatic team encountered numerous obstacles but ultimately positioned Yemen on a path toward enhanced security and modest political progress.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

As a former colleague of author Amb (ret) Edmund Hull, I can attest that the author not only knows but has lived first-hand what he has written about in this excellent book. Edmund was one of our

nation's premier experts on the Arab world and spent his entire career trying to understand and explain the nuances of this fascinating region to our policymakers. Later in his career, he got the opportunity to be one of those key policymakers. His posting to Yemen in 2001 gave him the opportunity to apply a lifetime of knowledge to understanding this difficult country. Make no mistake, Edmund is anything but a Lawrence of Arabia suffering from clientitis to the country in which he was posted. His years as a senior counterterrorism official gave him the realistic perspective that one sees in this book, where he is not afraid to take on senior Yemeni officials for their failings. The book also gives a remarkably candid perspective on how the US government actually works from an insider who knows--our successes, failures, shortcomings, micromanagement, and ignorance hiding in the guise of a know-it-all perspective. Bravo for Edmund in that he also recognizes the indispensable but often unappreciated role that spouses in the Foreign Service play. This short volume is easy to read, in large part due to the author's fluid prose and well-organized style. It should be must-reading for university students seriously interested in following a diplomatic career as well as for diplomats from all nations who want to get a better understanding and appreciation of how the US foreign policymaking system actually operates. Indeed, its appeal is really to a much wider audience--all those who are interested in understanding how the foreign policy process actually works.

Ambassador Edmund Hull has written a fascinating account of his efforts to work with the Yemeni government to neutralize al Qaeda in Yemen during his tenure there 2001-2004. He gives an unvarnished, insider's account of the difficult personalities, the egos and the conflicting agendas in both the Yemeni and the US government. Trying to convince skeptics on both sides of his innovative approaches in linking development to security and security to development, he details in readable and often humorous terms both successes and failures. Descriptions of high level meetings in Washington and risky trips to remote tribal outposts are equally entertaining to the layperson, as are his capsule characterizations of the principal players. A refreshing book written by a real expert who is able to translate his expertise for the rest of us to understand.

This is a must-read for those who seek to understand how effective diplomacy can contribute to countering terrorist networks abroad. Hull describes how, in Yemen, his embassy was able to convince both a reluctant host government and a divided American administration that they could work together successfully to check the spread, and even roll back, dangerous terrorist cells. Using imagination as well as bureaucratic skills to marshal the necessary American resources, balanced

by diplomatic skills to sell the Yemeni government on a program of active cooperation, Hull and his country team were able to create a model "whole of government" approach. Along with a flowing narrative and good descriptions of people and events, Hull also includes useful comments on the practical considerations of creating an appropriate balance between military and diplomatic approaches to combating terrorism. Terrorist networks can be neutralized only when they are both lethal to their participants and unwelcome to their host populations; Embassy Sanaa was able to find the right combination for the time. That conditions subsequently changed for the worse in no way negates the valuable lessons that can be learned from this account.

Edmund Hull writing style is very to point, yet at the same time helps purvey the sense & emotions going on during each situation. I really enjoyed reading this book after reading the Johnsen book on Yemen. I will continue to read books from this publishing line.

From an Ambassador's perspective, a very enjoyable read. It is a shame the limited progress Ambassador managed to see, seems to be heading the other direction now. Let us hope President Hadi gets help; he's going to need.

Anyone, not just professionals, can read this insightful account of Ambassador Hull's years in Yemen (2001-2004) to learn what has worked in the past to shutdown Al Qaeda in one of its primary training grounds. The book is very readable and engaging. Hull personalizes the work done in Yemen so the reader gets a feel for the human factors involved for Americans and Yemenis alike. Ambassador Hull laid the groundwork for a path to peaceful coexistence for the USA and Yemen.

Very quality book. Gives a great description of Yemeni history and a glimpse of US major interests in the country and region. Amb. Hull does not shy away from blaming a somewhat confusing and, often contradictory, US foreign policy apparatus including State, DoD, CIA, FBI, Dept. of Agriculture, USAID and more. Interestingly, Hull singles out NDI as a "do-gooder" in the larger scheme of things. Read the book, you won't regret it. Only complaint is that, at times, it reads a bit redundantly, as if the editing process was done chapter by chapter in a non-integrated fashion. Also, the author is bit self-congratulatory... Typical of most Ambassadors, though.

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