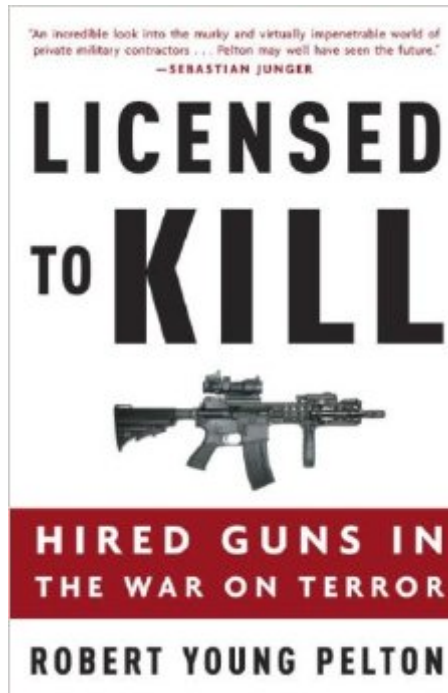


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Licensed To Kill: Hired Guns In The War On Terror



Synopsis

Robert Young Pelton first became aware of the phenomenon of hired guns in the War on Terror when he met a covert team of contractors on the Afghanistan/Pakistan border in the fall of 2003. Pelton soon embarked on a globe-spanning odyssey to penetrate and understand this shadowy world, ultimately delivering stunning insights into the way private soldiers are used. Enter a blood-soaked world of South African mercenaries and tribal fighters backed by ruthless financiers. Drop into Baghdad's Green Zone, strap on body armor, and take a daily high-speed ride with a doomed crew of security contractors who dodge car bombs and snipers just to get their charges to the airport. Share a drink in a chic hotel bar with wealthy owners of private armies who debate the best way to stay alive in war zones. *Licensed to Kill* spans four continents and three years, taking us inside the CIA's dirty wars; the brutal contractor murders in Fallujah and the Alamo-like sieges in Najaf and Al Kut; the Deep South contractor training camps where ex-Special Operations soldiers and even small town cops learn the ropes; the contractor conventions where macho attendees swap bullet-punctuated tales and discuss upcoming gigs; and the grim Central African prison where contractors turned failed mercenaries pay a steep price. The United States has encouraged the use of the private sector in all facets of the War on Terror, placing contractors outside the bounds of functional legal constraints. With the shocking clarity that can come only from firsthand observation, *Licensed to Kill* painstakingly deconstructs the most controversial events and introduces the pivotal players. Most disturbingly, it shows that there are indeed thousands of contractors—with hundreds more being produced every month—who've been given a license to kill, their services available to the highest bidder. From the Hardcover edition.

Book Information

Paperback: 376 pages

Publisher: Broadway Books; Reprint edition (August 28, 2007)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1400097827

ISBN-13: 978-1400097821

Product Dimensions: 5.2 x 0.8 x 8 inches

Shipping Weight: 6.4 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.5 out of 5 stars — See all reviews (96 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #260,209 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #199 in Books > Business & Money > Processes & Infrastructure > Government & Business #215 in Books > History > Military

Customer Reviews

RYP's book on the modern history of PSC's offers what appears to be an honest look into the world of today's military contractor, or what some would call "mercenary". Much of the book covers the work of PSC's in Iraq today and gives an honest look into what the job entails. The daily hurry-up and wait game, the same routine day in and day out, with short bursts on intense violence and excitement and the ever-present knowledge that the enemy is everywhere and can be everyone (or anything - IED's). Mr. Pelton seems to gain a lot of access to not only the personalities of those running today's security companies, but those that ran and operated in past ones, such as Sandline and Executive Outcomes. Some of their (the owners and the operators) motivations are laid out in the open, some are perceived and some are questioned. For example, the US contractors that work in Iraq mostly seem to be family men, trained in the military, that have no other job experience or training and who "saw the light" in making military wages or go private and make upwards of \$10k p/month. Now although their main motivation seems to be money and might classify them as a "mercenary force", you do not get the idea that they are for hire to the highest bidder. They are doing what they were trained to do, working for the goals of the US, just making more money. There are also those who seem to like the money and excitement of the job. RYP also covers the effects of the Blackwater contractors who were ambushed, mutilated, killed and hung from a bridge on the industry. He is able to give an objective and honest look into both the worlds of private military companies, those that are working "above board" as security specialists and those who have taken on more a mercenary role in world affairs.

Another successful presentation of Pelton's trademark seamless mixture of adventure travel, keen observation and wry humour. In this work he takes us on an incredible journey through the controversial world of private military companies. Up front he promises to take us along for the ride and we can form our own opinions, and by every measure in that regard he delivers. The breadth of the journey is astonishing. As a reader you feel as though you are tagging along for visits to Washington DC product launches, secret operations on the Afghan/Pakistan border and convoy trips along Iraq's deadly Route Irish. You can also vicariously attend training at the Blackwater facility in Myock NC, then go back in time to hear about the action in Sierra Leone and Equatorial Guinea. The view is as comprehensive as possible without sacrificing detail or overloading the reader. The question regarding the difference between a security contractor and a mercenary in

artfully dealt with through stories of colourful characters. The book is rich in these, from conversations at a Dallas convention for security to imprisoned mercenaries. The point is made that the difference between a mercenary and a security contractor lies in a personal moral code. The high end of the spectrum is illustrated by a contractor nicknamed "Miyagi" who embodies professionalism and gives up police work to become a contractor in Iraq, incredibly to allow his wife to give up the stress of being a court reporter in LA. The low end of the spectrum is the circus tale of "Jack" Idema, an opportunist who travelled to Afghan to end up in jail. In seeing these characters we see the potential, both good and bad, of actors in the privatized security. The book really hits stride in the illustrations of corporate behaviour.

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