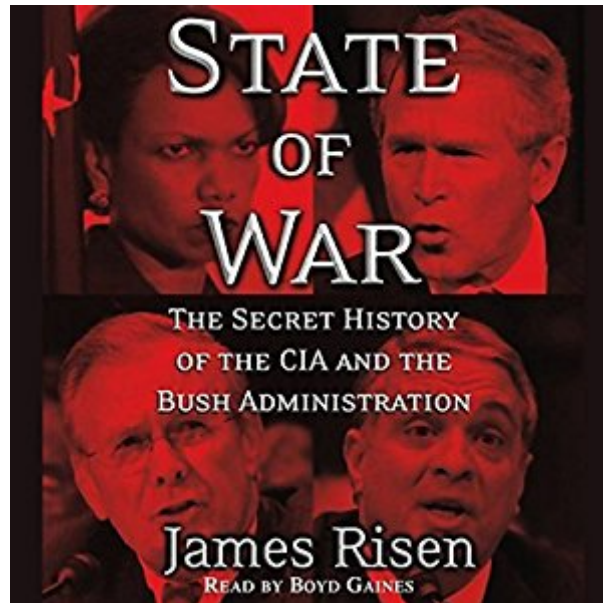


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State Of War: The Secret History Of The CIA And The Bush Administration



Synopsis

With relentless media coverage, breathtaking events, and extraordinary congressional and independent investigations, it is hard to believe that we still might not know some of the most significant facts about the presidency of George W. Bush. Yet beneath the surface events of the Bush presidency lies a secret history, a series of hidden events that makes a mockery of current debate. This hidden history involves domestic spying, abuses of power, and outrageous operations. It includes a CIA that became caught in a political cross fire that it could not withstand, and what it did to respond. It includes a Defense Department that made its own foreign policy, even against the wishes of the commander-in-chief. It features a president who created a sphere of deniability in which his top aides were briefed on matters of the utmost sensitivity, but the president was carefully kept in ignorance. *State of War* reveals this hidden history for the first time, including scandals that will redefine the Bush presidency.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

EDITED to add note at bottom addressing anonymous sceptic. EDITED 6 Jun 06 to add note of Pentagon failing to capture Bin Laden. There are three major scoops in this book that earn it five stars where the rest of the book might only merit four: 1) The obvious scoop now before Congress and the press, with respect to the National Security Agency (NSA) eavesdropping on citizens without a warrant. 2) The really really huge scoop, that Charlie Allen, then Deputy Director of Central Intelligence for Collection, was able to guide the recruitment of no fewer than 30 Iraqis able to travel back to see their relatives and conclusively document that there was no nuclear program and no

weapons of mass destruction--this information was evidently not provided to Congress, the President, or (naturally), the public.³) Slightly less sensational, the book reveals for the first time that a CIA "bait" operation actually delivered to Iran completely useful plans for creating a nuclear bomb...the CIA "flaws" intended to render the plans unworkable were detected in one glance by a Russian courier scientist, and easily correctable by the Iranians. Over-all the book renders an important public service by pulling together in one place the many tid-bits that are publicly known, but is distressingly weak on crediting those many other sources (e.g. Jim Bamford, the last word on NSA). The cover of the book is quite revealing in that it has photos of Bush, Rumsfeld, Rice, and Tenet--those who follow the politics of the Executive know that Cheney is the man pulling the puppet strings, generally without being detected, and it is Cheney that allowed Rumsfeld to blatantly ignore the President, steam-roll Condi Rice, disrespect Tenet, and sideline Colin Powell.

The author, James Risen attempts to write a fair and accurate account of the secret history of the C.I.A. and the Bush Administration. He succeeds admirably. He acknowledges that President Clinton had little interest in the intelligence services, which had already begun to stagnate after the end of the cold war. Not realizing that danger doesn't go away, it only changes shape, the CIA had no assets embedded in the middle east to get the valuable intelligence it required. Most of the regimes maintained control that was so tight it would have taken years for someone to successfully infiltrate any regime. Then there was bad management and bad decisions. Clinton appointed a director who made it clear he had no interest in the job. Senior CIA personnel left the agency and their experience at the door of retirement. Although a new director named Tenet restored morale, he was not able to provide the leadership the agency needed. He also allowed ingratiating junior analysts to bypass their immediate supervisors to deliver the information that he wanted to hear e.g. that aluminum tubes were used for WMD production. Tenet also steered clear of information that he knew would not please his bosses. This included the Iraqi-American woman the CIA coaxed into returning home to elicit information from her brother who was working on nuclear development. He told his sister that Americans inadvertently blasted the facility in the first Gulf War, and that the project was dead in the water. When the Iraqi-American doctor returned with her brother's information, the information was given short shrift. C.I.A. officers who told the painful truth about the deteriorating conditions in Iraq found themselves defending their careers or being harangued into retirement.

This is a clear exposition of the CIA's incompetence, and back-door politics within the Bush

administration. James Risen exposes several violations of the US Constitution, in terms of blatant infringements of privacy laws committed against the American people. He also outlines the back-channel decision-making between Vice President Cheney and Donald Rumsfeld, known old hands at Machiavellian politics, clearly going behind the president's back on key issues regarding world terrorism and the war in Iraq. The key theme in Risen's argument is the incompetence, lack of courage and downright obsequiousness of once Director of the CIA, George Tenet, who appears more of a PR man, one of the "good old boys", the tragic "yes man", letting play ground bullies like Donald Rumsfeld call all the shots, attempting to pull the entire US intelligence community under his power - and he has almost succeeded. In this convoluted mess of lies, betrayal and incompetence, Risen has managed to write a clear piece on many touchy issues, revealing a government that has knee-jerked us into a war that has become a quagmire, that some believe is far worse than Vietnam. The WMD question has currently become old news. When the National Intelligence Estimate (Independent WMD committee) concluded that the CIA's reports regarding Iraq's so-called nuclear program and biological laboratories, "were all wrong" (P. 22) Risen unpacks the lies, withheld reports and bully tactics that the Bush administration used towards anyone who contradicted their views, is a chilling story of out and out bureaucratic warfare, revealing once again the ineptness of the dwindling CIA. The administration did not want to hear the truth, that is to say, Iraq having folded their nuclear aspirations at the end of the first Gulf War.

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