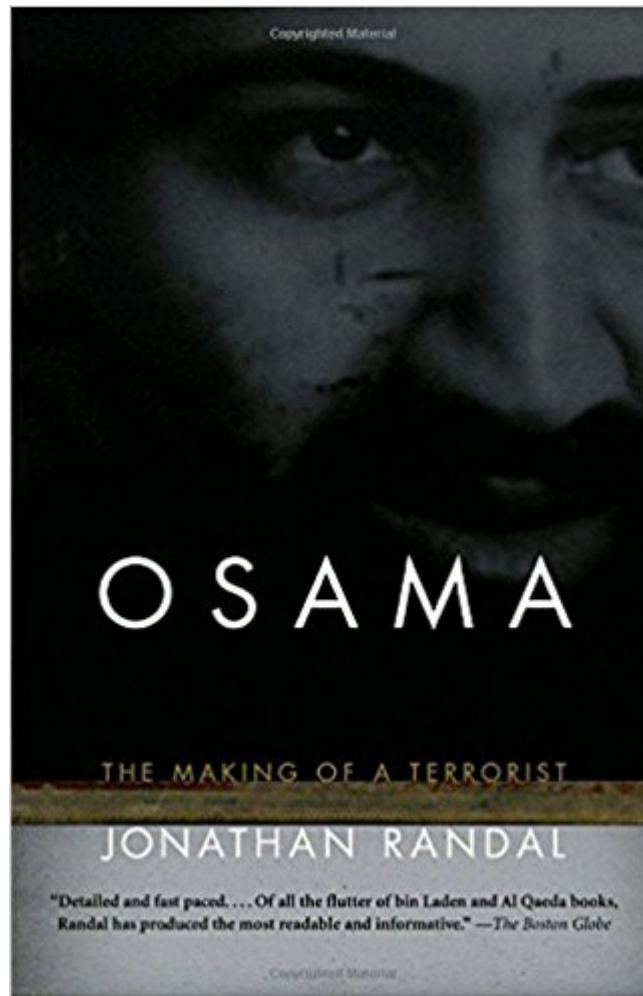




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Osama: The Making Of A Terrorist



Synopsis

How is it possible for one middle-aged Saudi millionaire to threaten the world's only superpower? This is the question at the center of Jonathan Randal's riveting, timely account of Osama bin Laden's life and role in the rise of terrorism in the Middle East. Randal traces the current sources of Osama's money and tells us why the Iraq war has played into the hands of the terrorists, while also providing essential insight and background on the history of American involvement in the Middle East. With his long-maintained sources in the Middle East and his intimate understanding of the region, Randal gives us a clearer explanation than any we have had of the whys and wherefores of the world's most prominent and feared terrorist.

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Customer Reviews

This study of the terrorist leader is an outstanding achievement, especially in light of the inherent difficulty in writing at length about so elusive a man, who rarely appears in public, has left few written traces yet has a larger-than-life stature. Randal, a veteran Middle East correspondent, triumphs over this challenge and succeeds in presenting bin Laden's life as representative of a larger regional narrative. Randal gives a thorough and penetrating look into the different stages of bin Laden's life and how each battle hardened his resolve, deepened his sense of struggle and intensified his anger. Randal is systematic in outlining the failures and miscalculations of the U.S. in its attempts to contain and thwart bin Laden—most notably, Clinton's series of bombings in Afghanistan and Sudan, which, in failing to kill bin Laden, led many Muslims to believe that Allah

had saved him and boosted his reputation hugely. Randal's writing is lively and rich, and he conveys complicated developments with ease and often grace. At one point he cleverly characterizes Osama as "a cross between the president of the Jihad Incorporated money machine and the head of a maverick Ford Foundation dispensing seed-money grants of a very special nature." Full of sharp prose (Osama as a "Muslim Samson" who "brought the temple down on his Taliban hosts") and shrewd assessments, this is a trenchant look into the life and mindset of one of the world's most mysterious, menacing and important figures. Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Former Washington Post foreign correspondent Randal admits up front that he never met the subject of his book. To bridge that understandable gap, he calls on 40 years' worth of sources and contacts to elucidate bin Laden's life and, even more, the world that shaped it. The author eschews journalistic neutrality, favoring a judgmental stance towards the failings of U.S. policy in the Middle East. This stance sounds a dull, tired note for many critics, as does the disingenuous title: Osama bin Laden appears less a subject than as a means to understand the foundations of today's terrorist culture. However, Randal's informed, nuanced presentation of the Islamic world makes the book a worthwhile read. Copyright © 2004 Phillips & Nelson Media, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Had to have it for a class

This book has NOTHING to do with its title, which was no doubt cooked up by the publishers for post-911 marketing. This book is basically a Washington Post reporter's memoir about stuff he covered in the Middle East, plus a lot of tedious inside baseball that probably didn't make it past the Post editors.

Randall spoke in London in October, 2005. I was there and brought the book back with me. This new (2005 paperback) edition is dramatically improved from the first, as it is informed by a mountain of data drawn together by the 911 Commission, whose report came out after Randal's first book went to press. Insights can be hard to glean, but a careful reader will see how the terrorists now striking from small to large scales around the world got underway. And it is only too clear how hard it will be to stop them as they operate in unstructured cells in scores of countries. One of most critical

points Randal makes is that Osama's gathering and training, partly underwritten by the US backing for Afghans against the Soviets in the nineties, brought together for the first time scores of disenchanted, religiously passionate people from across Islam. Randal notes that these people, gathered to train and fight by Osama, had little knowledge of fellow thinkers outside their villages in countries scattered across the world. Now, in the band from Morocco to the Philippines, there are trained, experienced terrorists who know they are part of a global force. This is Osama's real legacy. His killing or capture becomes a small historic fact. As Randal clearly shows, it was Osama at work in the nineties -- long before 911 -- that flows on. There are many lessons to be taken away and they are well illuminated in the new version of OSAMA.

This is an excellent and detailed portrayal of Osama bin Laden. It is like his biography so far. Being in his late forties, Osama is still relatively young, and if he survives his dangerous lifestyle as being the most wanted fugitive in the Western World, he could still achieve a lot more than he has so far. Given his line of work, this is a frightening thought. Randal has conducted detailed research, that allowed him to portray a thorough psychological character profile of Osama from his childhood to nowadays. Contrary to what might be expected, in Randal's portrayal of Osama one sees a very capable, calculating, intelligent, and charismatic leader. He also outlines the social and historical circumstances that allowed Osama to become the defacto supranational leader of terrorist networks, giving him a certain kind of power that is second to none. Randal covers how the House of Saud supported and promoted Osama to become a leading fundraiser to mount a guerrilla effort against the Russians in Afghanistan. We know that the CIA also helped out in setting up some of the training camps in Afghanistan to fight off the Russians. With the support of both the House of Saud and the U.S. the Jihadis succeeded beautifully and beat back the Russians in Afghanistan. But, both Saudi Arabia and the U.S. at the time in the eighties did not suspect they had created a Scorpio that would use his newly found stinging power to hurt them both [Saudi Arabia and the U.S.]. Randal describes how Osama became a superstar of the freedom fighting set of the Islamic World long before 9/11. Dubious achievements such as the masterminding of the bombing of several American embassies throughout Africa in the nineties turned Osama into a rock star so to speak within the Jihad aficionados nearly a decade before he became a household name in the U.S. Randal also engages in a broader topic covering the weaknesses that the U.S. has in dealing with the Islamic insurrection. These weaknesses include a lack of contacts, intelligence, linguistic and cultural knowledge that would allow the infiltration of Islamic terrorist networks at the local level. In other words, Osama and his subordinates have a far easier time infiltrating the open societies of

Western countries than the reverse. Randal does not offer easy solutions on how to deal with the Osama threat. He recognizes that both Saudi Arabia and the U.S. have so far floundered in dealing with it. Randal does not see any quick success in controlling Al Qaeda. Nevertheless, if you want to better understand and know who is Osama, and broaden your knowledge regarding the Islamic insurrection and their related terrorist networks; this is an excellent book that makes a valid contribution to the already abundant literature on the subject.

This book was very well written. It contained a lot of historical facts about Bin Laden and about terrorism. I didn't realize how important the al-Saud factor was. It is huge and changes my perspective on what motivates OBL. I also was intrigued by the Algerian connection and the various Al Qaeda lieutenants who were so important to the organization. Insights into the Clinton and Bush administrations handling of terrorism helps frame the whole OBL issue. It's interesting to read the book after the presidential election which the author did not have privy too. Although I thought the bias on the neocons and the GWOT was too cliché-ish, Mr Randall definitely did his homework and did a great job as a journalist and writer to inform the average American on a problem that has changed our lives. I strongly recommend the book.

I have gone through half of the book (intend to read the other half as well) but it's not the book I thought it would be. It's more of a story of the middle east politics over the past twenty years, the Afghan war and Pakistan's involvement in it. Tonnes of information from personal encounters of the author and through his friends and acquaintances. Not your typical bed time book, a bit difficult to digest.

A well researched book, balanced and objective, informative and engrossing. I am very sad that the people who gave it one star are writing as if they have to prove something.

The self-aggrandizement is downright nauseating. Randal can easily put you to sleep with his "knowledge" and "insight". The title is a little misleading since you don't even hear a thing about Bin Laden till the sixtieth page practically. All you get from this is how the Bush administration is comparable to the Nazi propaganda machine with its "Big Lies" and that Israel is the Great Oppressor. His constant chastizing of the Bush administration as simpletons toward their policy on Terror is quite comical since his grand idea is appeasement/containment. Wow, do you think he thought that one up all by himself. Bold thinking I'll tell ya. His blather is extremely numbing

anchored by his favorite word, comeuppance. I would give it a negative star if I could

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