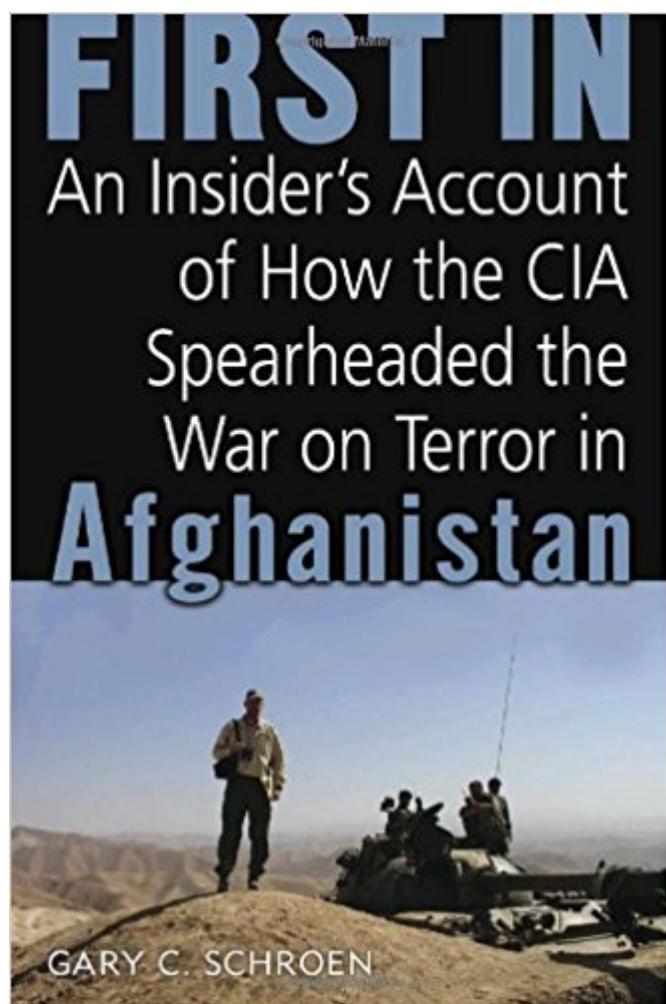


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First In: An Insider's Account Of How The CIA Spearheaded The War On Terror In Afghanistan



Synopsis

While America held its breath in the days immediately following 9/11, a small but determined group of CIA agents covertly began to change history. This is the riveting first-person account of the treacherous top-secret mission inside Afghanistan to set the stage for the defeat of the Taliban and launch the war on terror. As thrilling as any novel, *First In* is a uniquely intimate look at a mission that began the U.S. retaliation against terrorism "and reclaimed the country of Afghanistan for its people.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Just days from retirement, Schroen, a former CIA station chief in Pakistan, was tapped to lead the effort to establish contact with the Northern Alliance in the days following 9/11; the 35-year CIA veteran commanded the first American team on the ground in Afghanistan. At the proverbial tip of the spear, the team slipped into the country and made contact with the Northern Alliance (a loose confederation of Afghan warlords that had been fighting the Taliban government and their al-Qaeda allies), secured their cooperation and set the stage for the deployment of Special Forces teams into Afghanistan. Schroen tells the story crisply and with intimate detail, taking readers on a journey that lurches from harrowing through exhilarating to frustrating "particularly in the realm of communications. "Sitting in the Panjshir Valley," the author glumly concludes, "I seemed to be shouting down a deep, dark hole" at brass thousands of miles away. Events eventually outran the policymakers, however, when a Northern Alliance general finally lost his patience and announced to his CIA contact, "I am going into Kabul regardless of what your NSC decides." Schroen delivers

what he advertises: a powerful account that takes the reader inside war councils and 19th-century "style cavalry charges in the months just after 9/11. (May 31) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

Schroen had recently retired from 35 years of service with the CIA when the U.S. was attacked by terrorists on 9/11. With experience operating in Afghanistan, he was tapped to lead a team to link with the Northern Alliance to prepare for a military operation against the Taliban. Two days before the attack on the U.S., Northern Alliance leaders had been killed, supposedly on the orders of Osama bin Ladin. On September 19, the CIA team, with six members and \$3 million, deployed to Afghanistan on a harrowing mission that included the order to kill bin Ladin. Schroen offers a first-person account of the intricacies of American politics and military operations in an atmosphere charged with the war on terror. He also incorporates historical background of U.S and Soviet involvement in Afghanistan and how the nation came to be in play in the war on terrorism. In an afterword, Schroen looks back on the mission--its successes and failures--from the perspective of the recent elections in Afghanistan and acknowledges the continued challenges in the region.

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This is the first in a series of books documenting the war on Al Qaeda from the perspective of a CIA officer sent post-9-11 with the express mission to destroy the terrorists, their support, uproot the Taliban and bring to justice those who inflicted terrible pain on The United States. First let me say this book brought back a lot of memories of those days after the attack. It's interesting many years late to review how we felt, how our leaders thought, and still feel the sting of the attack on our nation. Two hundred years from now people will still be reviewing the historical record. It is for this reason I am most pleased to have read this book. The author was unique in the sense that he had experience in the region prior to the events that brought him there post-9-11. Because of his contacts and his knowledge of language and culture he was ideal to bring an alliance of tribes inline in order to destroy the enemy. This book deals predominantly with that event. There is no lack of action. But the book does deal with the important issues of rapidly bringing the war to Al Qaeda. This war developed rapidly and the quality of management needed to ensure its success is quite remarkable. Ultimately this book merges with another book Jawbreaker: The Attack on Bin Laden and Al Qaeda: A Personal Account by the CIA's Key Field Commander by Gary Berntsen who takes what was built by Gary Schroen. There's more physical action in this book . But none-the-less the books provide an inside view of those dark days. Over all this is a very interesting

book about the war in Afghanistan. If you enjoyed this then I would strongly suggest Hank Crumpton's book *The Art of Intelligence: lessons from a Life in the CIA*'s clandestine service as they both deal with direct intervention in Afghanistan. I would also recommend *Hard Measures* by Jose A Rodriguez as a primer for what happens when you have key assets with information derived from the battle field. All four of the books create an historical record of the CIA's activities. Well, at least what they will release to the public. There is always a *rest of the story* some place waiting to be read.

Unlike many reviewers, I wasn't expecting some spy thriller or a military action novel. But I did expect for such an important book to have received more attention in editing. As you can tell from the description and other reviews, the book is a very frank account of the CIA's initial foray into Afghanistan after 9/11. The author has first hand experience, as he led the effort. But he's not a great writer. He repeats himself so much that I got the feeling he wrote the chapters at long intervals, and never went back to re-read what he'd done. A good editor would have smoothed out the flow and eliminated the retelling of the same facts over and over. And a good proofreader would have caught the typos, which were numerous enough as to be distracting (Schroen spells GPS as GSP a few times, which left me wondering "OK, he told us about the GPS team in the last chapter, but what's the GSP team? Is that the same guys, or is he talking about something else?"). I suspect the publisher was rushed to get the book to market. That said, it was an interesting story, which gave me insight into the strange military and political history of Afghanistan.

A great account of how things actually unfolded in those first months and years following 9/11. There's some very insightful opinion here, but the book primarily focuses on the facts - to include how we let Bin Laden escape Tora Bora for his long (if recent ended) life on the run. I worked on this issue, as a senior CT intelligence officer for the "other" major intelligence agency (DIA) and this book does a great job discussing things most of us aren't allowed to talk about. I'd definitely recommend this read, even if it is a bit dated at the time of this review.

This is a one of a kind source on the first weeks of the war. Avid readers on the topic or people in the know might feel certain areas are occasionally glossed over, or downplayed, but what can you expect from an agency officer edited by agency editors? It's not a serious issue, and happens mostly in the background info - 'Ghost Wars' by Steve Coll is a great companion for this if you need a more critical account of the CIA. Besides that, this is fantastic and irreplaceable. It's remarkable

how consistently people involved in the Afghan war think (read: know firsthand) that Iraq was a mistake.

You almost feel like you are there with Gary as they mold their lives around the reality of dealing with politics and a culture very different from the lives they left at home.

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