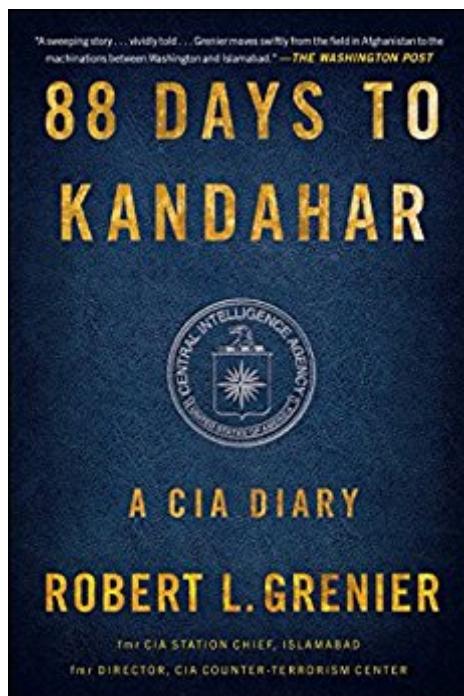


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88 Days To Kandahar: A CIA Diary



Synopsis

The “first” Afghan War, a CIA war in response to 9/11, was directed by the CIA Station Chief in Islamabad. It put Hamid Karzai in power in 88 days. “If you want an insider’s account of the first American-Afghan War, you can’t do better than this.” Important reading to understand where we are today (Library Journal). From his preparation of the original, post-9/11 war plan, approved by President Bush, through to the final, fleeting victory, Robert Grenier relates the tale of the “southern campaign,” which drove al-Qaeda and the Taliban from Kandahar, its capital, in an astonishing eighty-eight days. “With his ringside seat as the senior agency official stationed closest to Afghanistan, Grenier is able to describe meeting by meeting, sometimes phone call after phone call, how events unfolded” (The New York Times). In his gripping account, we meet: General Tommy Franks, who bridles at CIA control of “his” war; General Jafar Amin, a gruff Pakistani intelligence officer who saves Grenier from committing career suicide; Maleeha Lodhi, Pakistan’s brilliant ambassador to the US, who tries to warn her government of the al-Qaeda threat; and Hamid Karzai, the puzzling anti-Taliban insurgent, a man with elements of greatness, petulance, and moods. With suspense and insight, Grenier details his very personal struggles and triumphs. 88 Days to Kandahar is “an action-packed tale, rich in implication, of the post-9/11 race to unseat the Taliban and rout al-Qaeda in Afghanistan” (Kirkus Reviews).

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Robert Grenier has done a great service by publishing his account of the first phase of the Afghan War. Until now, the narrative of this period has been dominated by the actions of the Northern Alliance, and the policy debates in Washington. However, the CIA Station in Islamabad (which Grenier led as Chief at the time of the 9/11 attacks) has long served as the front line for American efforts against al Qaeda. As such, Grenier played a central role in crafting the initial US response to the attacks. Grenier's prose is smooth and incisive, and presents a surprising level of detail given the sensitivity of his role. As a personal account, the story is undoubtedly biased, though this adds a color to the work which improves rather than detracts from the story. Grenier is up front about his own failings as well, which helps avoid any hint that he might be writing this solely to burnish his own part in the making of history. Cannot recommend this highly enough.

This book sets the record straight as to events on the ground in Pakistan and Afghanistan in the days after the 9/11 attacks, including Mr. Grenier's role as the architect of the fall of Kandahar and final military defeat of the Taliban at the hands of U.S. forces and their Afghan tribal partners. In the absence of any semblance of a plan by either the military or CIA's Counterterrorism Center (CTC), it was Grenier's plan to lash up U.S. military and intelligence personnel with Afghan tribal leaders such as Karzai and Shirzai -- a plan that Grenier's own CIA headquarters and CTC vehemently opposed and tried every way it could to thwart. But with CIA Director Tenet's approval, Grenier and his team in Pakistan and Afghanistan forged ahead with the plan, with tremendous success, ultimately bringing about the defeat of the Taliban and end of the war. Charlans such as CTC's Hank Crumpton have attempted to steal that valor from those who were actually on the ground at the time, but this volume puts fabrications such as his to rest once and for all.

This text provides interesting detail concerning the events leading up to the departure of the Taliban from Afghanistan. Fascinating reading! It gave a much clearer picture of the role of human intelligence in dealing with difficult circumstances in this part of the world. Also there is more

information than one might want to know about internal CIA politics, and dealings with Administration officials. Suspicions are confirmed regarding the ways that intelligence analysis can be twisted by the customer to support positions already taken. This should be a "must read" for anyone involved in various aspects of intelligence collection and analysis.

The author was the CIA station chief in Islamabad around 9/11, and later rose to be the head of the CIA Counter-Terrorism Center. Grenier provides a view of the process by which senior professionals contribute to the formulation of policy within the US government bureaucracy, with the all the cultural stresses and challenges that process entails. I found myself sympathizing with his efforts and (mostly) with his views, and admiring his success in influencing policy in a generally beneficial direction, at least as he tells it. I came away with the sense that the US, and perhaps the world, is fortunate to have people like Grenier serving it.

Excellent Book.

This book is a well crafted journal of a time of huge uncertainty. Grenier puts many conditions, decisions and people in context to better understand the early days. The book is so enlightening frankly, I hated to reach the last page....but the author deserves praise for his dedication in placing facts where they need to be.

GREAT INSIDE LOOK AT THE PERIOD IN AFGHANISTAN AND PAKISTAN BEFORE AND IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING 9/11, AND WHAT WAS DONE IN THAT TIME BOTH RIGHT AND NOT SO RIGHT BY THE HIGHEST LEVELS OF THE US GOVERNMENT.

Great Book! Goes beyond "their I was" and delves deeper into the geo-political reasons for some of the good/bad decisions that were made at the Strategic/Operational level. Reader really comes away with how the US dropped the ball after Iraq moved into the crosshairs.

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