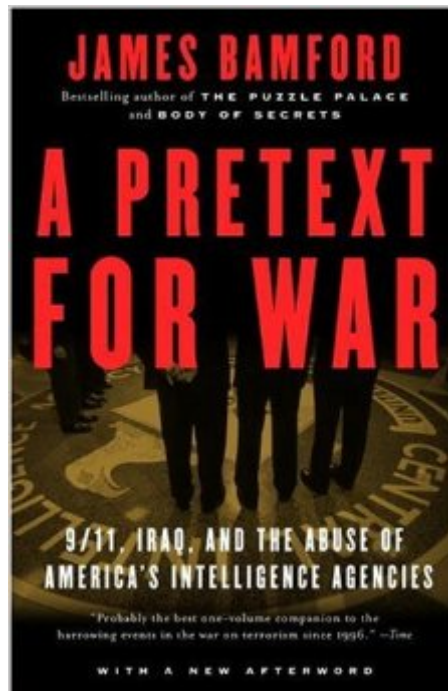


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A Pretext For War: 9/11, Iraq, And The Abuse Of America's Intelligence Agencies



Synopsis

In *A Pretext for War*, acclaimed author James Bamford—“whose classic book *The Puzzle Palace* first revealed the existence of the National Security Agency”—draws on his unparalleled access to top intelligence sources to produce a devastating exposé of the intelligence community and the Bush administration. *A Pretext for War* reveals the systematic weaknesses behind the failure to detect or prevent the 9/11 attacks, and details the Bush administration’s subsequent misuse of intelligence to sell preemptive war to the American people. Filled with unprecedented new revelations, from the sites of undisclosed locations to the actual sources of America’s Middle East policy, *A Pretext for War* is essential reading for anyone concerned about the security of the United States.

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Customer Reviews

Like one of the other reviewers here on , I am an intelligence analyst for the US government. Unlike that reviewer, I personally witnessed how the Bush administration fabricated, twisted, distorted, "cherry-picked" and otherwise misused intelligence to justify the war in Iraq. Many of us on the inside pretty much knew that this war was already a done deal more than a year before it actually happened - Final decisions technically may not have been made, but it was obvious from observing what went on on a day-to-day basis that the war was going to happen. If it had not been for Colin Powell, it probably would have happened much earlier. It was my personal experience in the run-up to this war that led me to read Bamford's book. I was curious to see how right he would get it. In the end, I feel he did a decent job. He has gathered good information, and he has been fairly

thorough. The only issues I really had with the book were that it seemed to meander or repeat itself in parts - a slight lack of organization, at least when you hold the body of the book up to his thesis - that we went to war in Iraq based on a pretext. I also was a little bored, personally, with the first two-thirds of the book, dealing with the events surrounding 9/11. Not that he didn't have good information there or that it wasn't well written, it just wasn't the reason I picked up the book. I was expecting more Iraq, less 9/11. I also felt that Bamford could have gone into more detail on the myriad of reasons that the administration actually had for invading Iraq. As Paul Wolfowitz acknowledged after the war, WMD was simply the easiest one for all the decision makers at the NSC to agree on.

I know Jim Bamford personally, and consider him to be one of the most capable of researchers and most objective of writers on intelligence matters. His deep personal relationships across the U.S. Intelligence Community make him the best possible reporter. For those of us steeped in the literature, that routinely read both the daily reporting and the regular books, much of what Jim has put together here will be repetitive. This is, however, the very best book to read if you only have the time for one book on the topic of 9-11, the failure of U.S. intelligence, and the corruption of U.S. policy in using 9-11 as a pretext for invading Iraq and giving Bin Laden the best possible (i.e. most stupid) strategic response to 9-11. This is the ideal book for any citizen who wants a professional "once over" tour of the various intelligence and policy pieces that broke down and allowed 9-11 to happen, and then allowed the entire "balance of powers" construct from our Founding Fathers to fly out the window. If you want to go deeper, see my thirteen Lists and 479+ other reviews of national security non-fiction. The book is especially strong on the Rendon Group being used to illegally propagandize American citizens with U.S. taxpayer funds, on the abject failure of George Tenet in revitalizing U.S. clandestine operations, on the failure (treated more kindly) of Mike Hayden to bring the National Security Agency into the 21st Century, and on the very unhealthy merger of the U.S.

Lest we forget, the first 60 pages of *A Pretext for War* give a harrowing replay of the hijackings of 9/11, as seen first from the Air National Guard's Northeast Air Defense Sector, tracking the planes on radar as they pursue their deadly course. The personal details, conversations and horror-struck impressions are a reminder of the shock felt by all caught in the glare of this monstrous enterprise. During the attacks on the World Trade Towers, President Bush remained in the classroom photo-op in Florida and General Myers, the acting military commander, spent forty-five minutes in the office of Senator Max Cleland, interviewing for the position of top brass in Cent Com,

unaware that the worst attack in this country's history was occurring. The extent of our lack of preparation is shocking at this point, inexplicable. The missing third plane was not yet located. One hundred and ten minutes after takeoff, the fourth plane, American Flight 11, came to a fiery end and the attacks were over at last. In the meat of the book, Bamford covers the spy apparatus in this country, from the Cold War efforts of the NSA to George Tenet's meteoric rise as the head of the CIA during the Clinton Administration and the importance of Presidential Daily Briefings. Piece by piece, Bamford builds a solid structure of information, moving toward his conclusion: we are not much better off now, two years later, in the area of surveillance in other countries. Then he segues into the parallel growth of Osama bin Laden's efforts to establish an anti-American legion of American fighters, in spite of active interference by Saudi Arabia and the freezing of bin Laden's assets. Critical to his cause is the continuing support of America for Israel's treatment of the Palestinians.

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