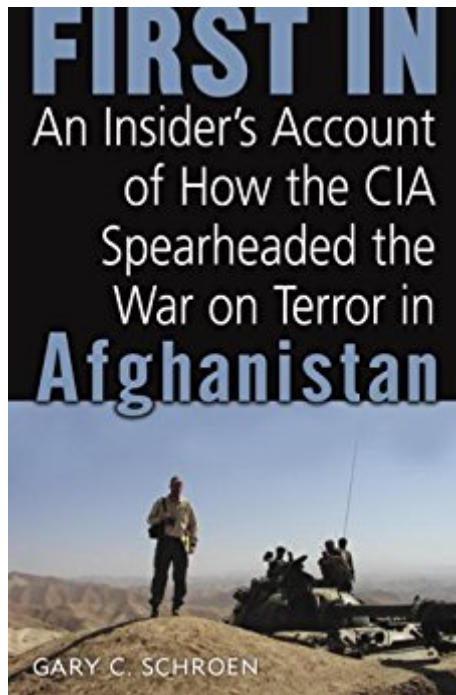


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First In: How Seven CIA Officers Opened The War On Terror In Afghanistan



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. From the Hardcover edition.

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Customer Reviews

EDIT of 20 Dec 07 to add links. This is a superb first-person account. I have absolute and total respect for this officer, his team, his courage, and what he accomplished within weeks of 9-11, setting the stage for a new form of warfare in which CIA opened the door, Special Forces turned on the lights, and conventional Air Force leveled the place. The book provides some extremely useful insights from the field with respect to Washington's failure to understand local politics and ground truth despite frequent detailed field appraisals from the Chief of Station, and the book makes it clear

that Pakistan lobbied Washington strategically and ably to "sell" its plan for taking over Afghanistan with its own allies, against both Russian and US (and for that matter, Chinese) best interests. There are five substantive military insights in this book: 1) Despite their enormous personal courage and high level of training, the US military special forces are handicapped by a joint defense-level policy that will not do deep bombing unless a Search & Rescue (SAR) capability is readily available. I recall the original Office of Strategic Services dropping people behind enemy lines (the pilots understood they might be shot down as part of the deal) and I just think to myself, shame on DoD, this force protection zero tolerance for casualties has gone too far. We need a Chairman of the Joint Chiefs with the balls to change the military culture back to one that is mission oriented rather than casualty averse.

This is a four-star account of a five-star operation. Schroen perpetuates a few errors, but (as an earlier reviewer on this site noted) in most instances it would take a committed Afghanophile to spot them. He largely dispels the miasma of Pakistan-fostered, western-perpetuated slander that has besmirched the reputation of the anti-Taliban resistance, the so-called Northern Alliance. He makes it clear the alliance, even after the 9/9/01 assassination of their charismatic leader Ahmad Shah Masood, were a responsibly and effectively led grassroots movement, heroic in their resistance to tyranny. With mingled wonder and dismay, he describes how the 'anti-Tajik' (ie anti-Northern Alliance) lobby in Washington held up the overthrow of the Taliban for weeks longer than necessary, by bombing marginal 'infrastructure' instead of frontline troop concentrations opposite alliance positions north of Kabul. And he doesn't hide his anger over his realization that his superiors in DC weren't even reading the painstaking firsthand analyses he forwarded almost nightly. Schroen minces no words exposing Pakistan's agenda. Islamabad saw the covert 1980s CIA arms pipeline to the anticommunist rebels as a means to place Afghanistan under the control of "a Pashtun-centered, fundamentalist religious party that will be malleable to manipulation by Pakistan ...". In the mid-1990s, "[t]he Pakistanis quickly came to see the Taliban as a possible answer to achieving their strategic political vision for Afghanistan, and shifted their full support accordingly." He describes in fascinating detail the CIA's liaison with former communist militia commander Abdul Rasheed Dostum, a sometime Northern Alliance hanger-on.

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