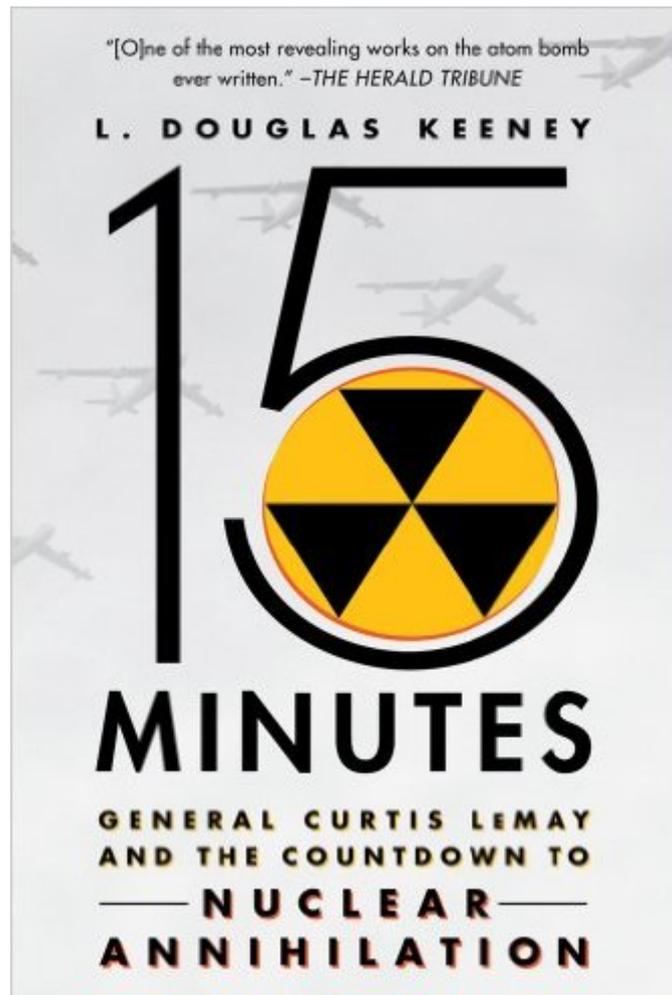


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15 Minutes: General Curtis LeMay And The Countdown To Nuclear Annihilation



Synopsis

Packed with startling revelations, this inside look at the secret side of the Cold War exposes just how close America came to total annihilation. During the Cold War, a flight crew had 15 minutes to get their nuke-laden plane in the air from the moment Soviet bombers were detected. 15 minutes between the earliest warning of an incoming nuclear strike and the first flash of an enemy warhead. This is the chilling true story of the incredibly risky steps our military took to protect us from that scenario, including:

- Over two thousand loaded bombers that crossed American skies. They sometimes crashed and at least nine times resulted in nuclear weapons being accidentally dropped.
- A system that would use timers and rockets to launch missiles even after everyone was dead.
- Disastrous atmospheric nuclear testing including the horrific runaway bomb that fooled scientists and put thousands of men in uniform in the center of a cloud of hot fallout.
- A plan to use dry lake beds to rebuild and launch a fighting force in the aftermath of nuclear war.

Based on formerly classified documents, military records, press accounts, interviews and over 10 years of research, 15 Minutes is one of the most important works on the atom bomb ever written.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

At first, I found the organization of "15 minutes" to be a little off putting--especially in the early going, the author describes a series of seemingly unrelated events in short, jarring paragraphs, many of which end in a somewhat melodramatic one-word teaser. Keeney does this to set up several different stories at once, which is why you'll wonder why the second paragraph in the chapter on "1945" is about the development of offshore oil and gas drilling in Louisiana in 1907 (it makes sense

eventually). I suspect the book's style owes a lot to Keeney's experience with television documentary (he's a co-founder of The Military Channel), and it actually works fairly well as the book builds momentum. If the book's thesis is that things had to happen at a faster and faster pace to preserve a credible strategic deterrent, the book's short, punchy paragraphs do an effective job of conveying the sense of urgency that must have pervaded SAC for nearly forty years.

I can't say enough good things about this book. My dad was in SAC, so I spent the first seventeen years of my life living on SAC bases. Accordingly, I was already familiar with most of the terms in the book, such as Chrome Dome, ORI's, cocked planes, and so forth, as well as having lived on a number of the bases listed in the book's action, such as Offut, Eglin, Ramey, Beale, and several others in between. Thus, this book to me was like Old Homecoming Week. I literally relived much of my childhood through this book. And General Curtis LeMay was an eminently beloved commander. I used to hear his name often. In fact, one anecdote which did not appear in the book, but which was told to me by my father and also repeated by other SAC personnel, is quite in character with LeMay. Here it is - One day after giving a speech on SAC to a group of military personnel, a Colonel approached LeMay and said, "General LeMay, SAC really sounds most impressive. How can I go about getting a transfer into SAC?" To which General LeMay replied, "Colonel, if you were worth a damn you'd already be in SAC." I mentioned that one of the bases we lived on was Ramey AFB, Puerto Rico. We were there smack in the middle of the Cuban Missile Crisis. Our school gymnasium was converted into a medevac, marines were coming ashore to practice amphibious assaults, the entire wing was either within running distance to their planes or in the air with enough payload to make the island of Cuba totally disappear, and my mother and my sister and myself stocked canned goods and clothes in the trunk of the car, ready to high-tail it at a moment's notice.

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