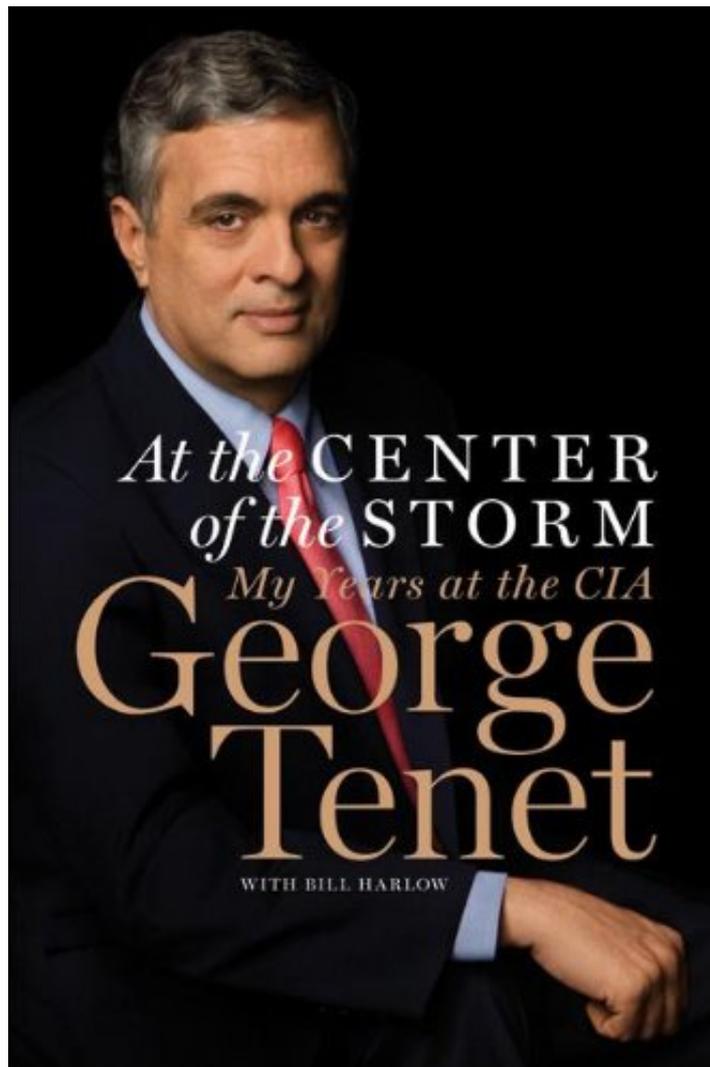


At the Center of the Storm: The CIA During America's Time of Crisis

by
George Tenet



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Synopsis

In the whirlwind of accusations and recriminations that emerged in the wake of 9/11 and the Iraq war, one man's vital testimony has been conspicuously absent. Candid and gripping, *At the Center of the Storm* recounts George Tenet's time at the Central Intelligence Agency, a revealing look at the inner workings of the most important intelligence organization in the world during the most challenging times in recent history. With unparalleled access to both the highest echelons of government and raw intelligence from the field, Tenet illuminates the CIA's painstaking attempts to prepare the country against new and deadly threats, disentangles the interlocking events that led to 9/11, and offers explosive new information on the deliberations and strategies that culminated in the U.S. invasion of Iraq. Beginning with his appointment as Director of Central Intelligence in 1997, Tenet unfolds the momentous events that led to 9/11 as he saw and experienced them: his declaration of war on al-Qa'ida; the CIA's covert operations inside Afghanistan; the worldwide operational plan to fight terrorists; his warnings of imminent attacks against American interests to White House officials in the summer of 2001; and the plan for a coordinated and devastating counterattack against al-Qa'ida laid down just six days after the attacks. Tenet's compelling narrative then turns to the war in Iraq as he provides dramatic insight and background on the run-up to the invasion, including a firsthand account of the fallout from the inclusion of "sixteen words" in the president's 2003 State of the Union address, which claimed that Saddam Hussein had sought to purchase uranium from Africa; the true context of Tenet's own now-famous "slam dunk" comment regarding Saddam's WMD program; and the CIA's critical role in an administration predisposed to take the country to war. In doing so, he sets the record straight about CIA operations and shows readers that the truth is more complex than suggested in other versions of recent history offered thus far. Through it all, Tenet paints an unflinching self-portrait of a man caught between the warring forces of the administration's decision-making process, the reams of frightening intelligence pouring in from around the world, and his own conscience. In *At the Center of the Storm*, George Tenet draws on his unmatched experience within the opaque mirrors of intelligence and provides crucial information previously undisclosed to offer a moving, revelatory profile of both a man and a nation in times of crisis.

What people say about this book

Mike Dillemoth, "Fantastic View From the Inside the Agency. All I all, this is an outstanding book. It flows well and is an easy read. It is, however, a long book in that it is over 500 pages. The author, George Tenet, takes the reader through 9/11, the invasion of Afghanistan, and the events surrounding the Iraq war. His recollection of the U.S. Government's actions in post invasion Iraq are extremely insightful. Mr. Tenet provides an amazingly honest assessment of the Agency's performance. He accepts blame in those instances where the CIA truly fell short. That said, he also defends the Agency where it was incorrectly criticized. He does this by providing the rest of the story to specific events. For example, he effectively debunks the erroneous story that he claimed the justification for invading Iraq would be a "slam dunk." By providing the back story, he is able to showcase the errors cited in other publications like Bob Woodward's book on the Iraq war. Bottom line: this a great narrative on how the CIA operated during some of its most challenging times. It provides a true insiders look at the how the Intelligence Community and the CIA in particular operated during 9/11 and the Iraq war. A fascinating read."

mike6, "Straight from the director-CIA. Mr. Tenet served as CIA Director for over five years. It is one of the toughest jobs in Washington. His account of this episode in his life is simply incredible. The writing is compelling, and the given all the material he must cover--it rates A plus! Every chapter is a lesson in intelligence, analysis, and the tough work which must be done to protect America daily by this agency. You will gain great respect and appreciation for what the CIA does and the amazing people who are unsung heroes in that organization. Great job--loved the book--highly recommend this to students and anyone interested in foreign policy or intelligence matters."

Mark A Ludvigson, "A Good Memoir. Very good memoir of a memorable time in our country's history. Portions of the book reviewed the history of terrorist acts against the United States since the period of time before the Gulf War (Desert Shield/Desert Storm). I found this interesting and helpful, giving unity to a series of tragic events that seemed confusing and unclearly related at the time. Accounts of the daily workings of intelligence acquisition bogged down a bit at times for me, as did the account of the political maneuverings that followed the absence of discovery of weapons of mass destruction after the first Iraq War. Nevertheless, they both give a plausible understanding of the daily labor of intelligence work and how treacherous can be the political mechanisms in Washington DC. All in all, a good account of these recent important times."

C. Williams, "Review. Very good read. As the title indicates, George Tenet and the CIA were "At the Center of the Storm" in the spin up to the Iraq War and the war to protect and defend the homeland. The book masterfully provides a first hand account into the decision making process that two President used to combat terrorist: pre-911 and Post 9-11. He and the CIA will forever be link to not connecting the dots and preventing 9-11. But this is a unfair assessment of the

quiet warrior who work in the shadows to protect the nation,,unlike military service members there are no parades and no welcome limes at the airports when they return, but there work is vital the defense of America. Mr, Tenet thanks for sharing your insight and thanks for years of service ringing the alarm bell to provide the policy maker with actionable intelligence to formulate policies to keep us safe.”

J. M. Gorman, “An Honest Portrait of American Intelligence (1997-2004). Contrary to what the book's back cover might have you believe, George Tenet does not use this book as a means to deflect criticism. Instead, he recaps his experience as DCI (1997-2004) in the most honest way that he can.Tenet never criticizes President Bush (43) explicitly. At times, he paints him as a man with good intentions. However, through much of Part III, Tenet implies that the President delegated (and abdicated) too much authority to his staff. Tenet vilifies Douglas Feith (undersecretary of defense for policy (2001-2005)) for promoting war with Iraq in advance of adequate supporting intelligence. He places Feith as a man who wielded a disproportionate amount of influence in the White House. It is left as an exercise for the reader to consider why President Bush was so willing to accept Feith's ideas in lieu of other credible viewpoints.As articulated in the `Afterword' [p. 490-491, 499], Tenet constantly reminds the reader of the CIA's role in government:"Often, at best, only 60 percent of the facts regarding any national security issue are knowable... Intelligence alone should never drive the formulation of policy. Good intelligence is no substitute for common sense or curiosity on the part of policy makers in thinking through the consequences of their actions... Intelligence does not operate in a vacuum, but within a broader mandate of policies and governance."Here are some other highlights of the book:- The CIA told the White House that Iraq likely possessed WMD (Chapter 17), but it never established a link between Iraq and al-Qa'ida (p.307).- "In Afghanistan, we had started from the ground up, allowing the various political groups to legitimize themselves, then building to a central, representational government. In Iraq, the process couldn't have been more different... We were in charge, and by God, we knew what was best." (p.439)- "Although CIA came to take everything we heard from [Ahmed] Chalabi with a healthy dose of skepticism, others, such as the vice president, Paul Wolfowitz, and Doug Feith, welcomed his views." (p. 397)- "On one of his trips to Iraq, Wolfowitz told our senior [CIA] man there, 'You don't understand the policy of the U.S. government, and if you don't understand the policy, you are hardly in a position to collect the intelligence to help that policy succeed.'" (p. 430)- The CIA suggested ways that the United States could establish peace in Iraq, but these suggestions were ignored (Chapter 23 and p. 441, 446).- Brent Scowcroft was the only administration official who expressed public disapproval of the White House's plan to go to war with Iraq (p. 315).- After the attack on the USS Cole, the U.S. "...Didn't need any additional excuses to go after UBL or his organization. But simply firing more cruise missiles into the desert wasn't going to accomplish anything. [The U.S.] needed to get into the Afghan sanctuary." (p. 128-131)- "For years, it had been obvious that without the cooperation of the Pakistanis, it would be almost impossible to root out al-Qa'ida...

The Pakistanis always knew more than they were telling us, and they had been singularly uncooperative in helping us run these guys down." (p. 139)- Al-Qa'ida planned to attack the New York City subway in the fall of 2003. The attack was cancelled during the last stages of preparation "for something better". (p.260-261)- "When I was with King Hussein, I always felt that I was in the presence of wisdom and history... I've often wondered what impact his wisdom would have had in helping all of us avert the mess we find ourselves in today." (p.71-72)"

Foliage18, "Informative read from an Ex CIA director who served under Clinton and Bush. Bought the paper back copy of the book but then realized I would be better off with the Kindle copy so I read it on my Kindle. This was a very informative book that gives you excellent insight to the CIA and the government and how things are definitely not as they seem from the outside. No matter what your politics are, this is a fascinating and at times, a humourous read. My suggestion is to keep a list of names since for me many middle eastern names are similar sounding. :-)"

B. Middleton, "Very interesting read of the 9/11 and Iraq era at the top of US government.. When I ordered the book I have a preconceived idea that George Tenet had been absolutely useless and along with Bush, Cheney, Rumsfeld, Wolfowitz, Bremmer et al was responsible for gross misconduct for the epic foreign policy disaster in Iraq. Having read through the book it has definitely given me a very different opinion of him. Obviously in a memoir you would expect that the author would certainly do their best to pain themselves in the best possible light, and to a certain extent 're-write history' where possible, but my impression is that he is very frank to admit where mistakes were made, including his. I can imagine that there are those who bear much greater responsibility for that stain on US and British history and who completely pass the book (pardon the pun). The book is especially interesting with regards to 9/11 and the periods before and after. It is a very interesting read and I would recommend it to anybody interested in that period of time, what the thinking was and what was influencing decisions."

b frank, "At the centre of the storm. A facinating read and so soon after the events!The book is a good read with a coherent explanation of the events of such a recent and troubled time which still rumbles on to this day.I couldn't help wondering how much was left out given that this book was published so soon after the events but it didn't leave me feeling short changed.A facinating insight into the workings of the CIA and at such an explosive time."

hil2, "Unbelievable account of the hard times of the CIA pre and post-9/11. I cannot begin to describe how fascinating this book was. George Tenet's detailing of how the CIA was facing funding crisis before the 9/11 attacks to the aftermath and the expansion really provided a vivid picture of how the CIA was dealing with counterterrorism threats. Really a great read for anyone interested in the CIA."

Jamie Norris, "Very interesting book on American Intelligence in lead up to 9/11 and the War in Iraq.. I would highly recommend this book as a source of knowledge about what the DCI George Tenet was thinking in the lead up to 9/11, where the CIA knew alQaeda was inside the US and ready to strike."

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