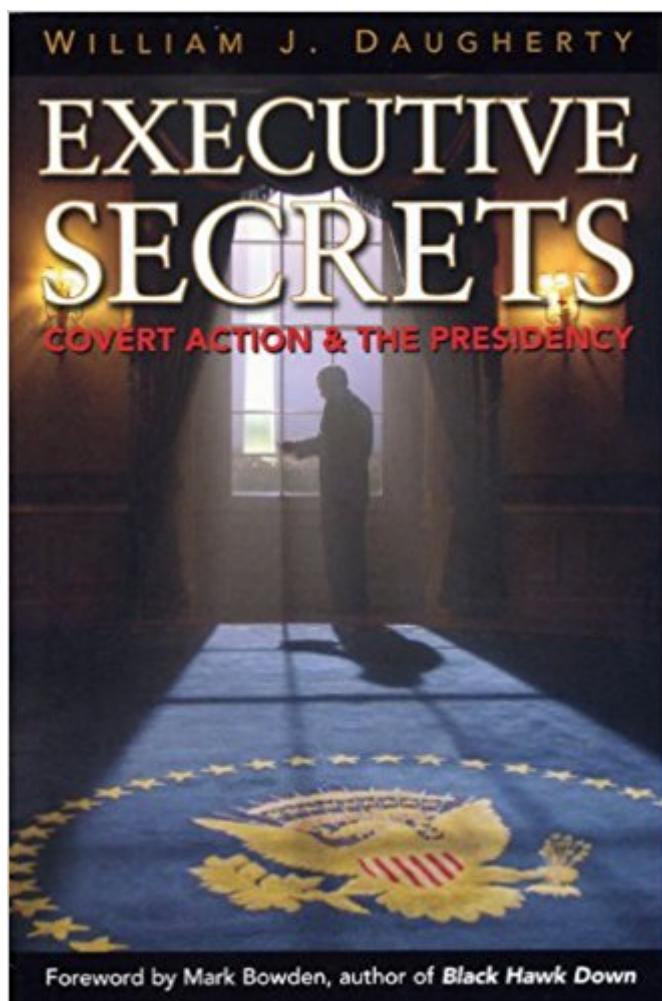


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Executive Secrets: Covert Action And The Presidency



Synopsis

A frank and refreshing evaluation of several Chief Executives, their Directors of Central Intelligence, and even some lower in the hierarchy, Executive Secrets shines light on the development and execution of foreign policy through the understanding of the tools available, of which covert action may be least known and understood. This book is a great tool for the press, the public, and many political appointees in the National Security System. A History Book Club Selection with a foreword by Mark Bowden, author of Black Hawk Down.

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Customer Reviews

"Named a 2005 Choice Outstanding Academic Title." [Daugherty] gives a frank and refreshing evaluation of several Chief Executives, their Directors of Central Intelligence, and even some lower in the hierarchy. Anyone interested or involved in the development and execution of foreign policy must know the tools available, of which covert action may be least known and understood. This understanding is also pertinent to a wider audience: the press, the public, and many political appointees in the National Security system. This book should help." Air Power History" A most informative study of covert action.... This well-researched, thoughtful book is a valuable work that will be treasured by scholars and professionals in the field. Highly recommended." Choice" A hard-hitting, balanced and highly successful effort to deal with the issue of presidential responsibility for covert action." John Stempel, Patterson School of Diplomacy, University of Kentucky" Daugherty has done us all a tremendous service by attempting

to rescue the Agency from the myths, both well-meaning and malevolent, that shape our understanding of it. . . . This book ought to dispel some of the fog that obscures our understanding of the C.I.A. and that prompts the gigantic mood swings in our attitude toward intelligence gathering and covert actions."Mark Bowden, from the foreword"There are some interesting and carefully drawn vignettes of covert operations here that demonstrate a skillful blending of declassified documents, investigative reports, and secondary sources. It is these case studies that make this one of those essential works for specialists in intelligence policy."Register of the Kentucky Historical Society"If you are a keen observer of the agency, this one will interest and instruct you."Rockland (ME) Courier-Gazette"Offers a richly textured book that clears up some common misconceptions of the CIA, as well as an insider's perspective on how covert action really works, or fails."Savannah (GA) Morning News"Readers of this timely and occasionally revelatory account may be surprised to learn that President Carter approved a covert action program to attack the internal legitimacy of the Soviet system, and that he repeatedly relied on covert action to achieve his foreign policy aims."Zbigniew Brzezinski"[Daugherty] has done a great service for those wanting to seriously understand the realistic capabilities of the organization. This is not an easy task, for the CIA has been the subject of many books, movies, and certain mindsets in the population."Foreign Area Officer Journal"

Foreword by Mark Bowden, author of *Black Hawk Down: A Story of Modern War* --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

This is truly an informative and eye opening book. This book sheds light on a number of US Presidents during their individual administrations and how they, integrated the nation's intelligence community to protect its citizens and interests throughout the world. I recommend it to anyone interested in learning more about how the Executive branch used covert action to shape the world.

This is an excellent, factual, and comprehensive review of covert action (CA) through the presidency of Bill Clinton. While a bit dated, the facts and background explanations in this book have not been equaled by any other book to my knowledge. The author is highly knowledgeable about CA and writes with an insider's understanding, but without any insider distortion.I hope the author is busy at work on an update, but this is still a book that should be read by any serious student of intelligence operations.

I used the contents, over a few years on my essays which were required in the courses, i was taking. I had to purchase the book, for my own library after picking it apart. The contents and subject matter is explained very well, to include the relationships between the actors as decisions are made. It is definitely one of the better books on the subject matter, to read and digest.

Thought provoking.

I ordered this item over a month ago and have no confirmation of shipment to date. I am beginning to wonder if the item will ever arrive. I would not recommend this seller unless you do not care when your item arrives.

Titles like this may smack of conspiracy theory, but very rarely do authors choose their own titles. A marketing team's title should not be confused with the authors' intent. In this case, a slightly flashy title fits the content--intelligence work is often duller and at the same time more exciting than its glamorous reputation. This point is made clear by the authors of this excellent book, developed by a fine writer and made infinitely credible by an author of unquestioned expertise. Secrets are revealed, of course, but nothing that couldn't be garnered from rigorous research. It is the meticulous attention to detail, delivered in an exciting, provocative tone, that separates this book from the miasma of contenders. The tone is sharp and compelling. The style is filled with facts and support but never burdened by them. For fans of solid U.S. history and those who want to know the true nature of intelligence work in America, this book is highly recommended.

"Executive Secrets" reviews the history of covert action since WW2 and provides information the general reader might not have had (contrary to other reviews, there are no "secret" secrets in this book, since the author limits his examples to declassified data approved by the CIA, which eliminates much information in the public domain that the agency can not or will not acknowledge, One good recent example of the impact of this policy is the an attempt by former CIA officer Melissa Mahle to deliver a speech at the 2007 conference of the International Ethics and Intelligence Association on rendition, prevented when the agency "gutted" her talk by removing information in the public domain which it did not want to give an imprimatur of official acknowledgement). The author is a former ranking official of the CIA and the context of this book is apologetic and defensive. It repetitively makes these points: (1) the CIA acts only when ordered to do so by the President, which orders since 1974 have been reviewed by relevant Senators and Representatives

- except when it does not, e.g. Iran-Contra, in which cases it is wrong and (2) the ability to reflect honestly and deeply by an experienced intelligent career professional is compromised significantly by assimilation into the agendas of a complex organizational structure and the bureaucratic distinctions that become highly relevant inside, but not to the outside observer or citizen. Because these two themes are the subtext of this book and the emotional energy of Daugherty's polemic, what is revealed is the impact of a lifelong career of assimilation to "insider" thinking and the blind spots and hubris that engenders. Examples: (1) The department or executive who did or did not approve particular actions is not, to the citizen, what is most important. Inside, it is. "Not on my desk" is a frequent defense, often heard. I once asked why a proposal was languishing inside one of the agencies and was told that it was being moved from desk to desk because no one wanted to go on record denying it. Thus has it always been; thus will it always be. (2) The entire enterprise of how and why covert action is executed is the primary concern of the citizen, not the oft-repeated mantra that nothing is done without approval of the President. That matters, of course, but it is subordinate to the larger issues which are ignored in this book. To the citizen, what the nation is doing is critical, not simply the chain of command which exonerates intelligence agencies of responsibility by denying deniability to the executive branch. So focused is the author on pressing accountability back to the White House from Truman forward that he does not seem to notice that he is undermining the "plausible deniability" it is his sworn obligation to uphold. Therefore, the righteous indignation which suffuses so many pages is undercut by exactly the kind of CYA activities in Washington that cause citizens to become cynical and dismissive. (3) The author fails to take fully into account, despite lip service to the fact of it, that the erosion of boundaries between foreign/domestic and our nation/other nation thanks to technological transformation of geopolitical realities (of which I have written extensively) means that "blowback" is not an incidental event but a chronic state of being for all of us. Actions and speech acts take place everywhere in the world at once, not just "here" or "there." Actions prohibited by the Constitution are now undertaken (the author would say - by order of the President! not independently by the agency! - and he would be absolutely right, but he would miss the point) from our ground and on our ground, obscuring former legal distinctions. As far back as the fifties, when the CIA appointed itself a Ministry of Culture and supported writers, artists, publishers, etc. to oppose Soviet "socialist realism" and propaganda, the hidden effect on America was immense. Writers favored by the agency because their works supported a covert political agenda prospered while those who wrote, for example, about the poor, like John Steinbeck, did not, or they made their way on their own without hidden financial and organizational support. Daugherty says of this and other efforts, "it is hard to imagine any American

being upset over these actions of the CIA."There perhaps is the essence of his blind spot. Those who matured during that era were victims as were all other unwitting people in the world of a false belief that a free market for art and literature and music as for other things evolved in an organic way, according to its own internal dynamics. This is, in fact, the essence of a principled conservatism, this respect for and love of the organic processes of society. But what was happening in fact was the emergence of a manipulated, leveraged, hidden structure of power - what Eisenhower called "the military industrial complex" in a warning that went unheeded and which now includes media, entertainment, academia, and all of the key components of a "free market" society - and thus the simple accepted truths of a generation of Americans were fundamentally betrayed by this radical inauthenticity at the core of our American enterprise. That Daugherty and other apologists like him can not entertain this, can not understand why this betrayal of the marketplace of ideas in the body politic is key to the cynicism of many Americans is the real problem with this work. Insiders become so imbued with the righteousness of their cause and the territorial distinctions of bureaucracy that this wholesale shift is unseen or, if seen, ignored or, if not ignored, celebrated with what feels like a smirk of innate superiority. That the entire establishment in Washington, including the intelligence community, was not elected or authorized to do this except by its own secret and self-justifying machinations is exactly the point. Oversight by a few Congressional representatives who are assimilated into the process as insiders, the elusive quality of executives orders like EO12333 which can be changed without public notice on the fly, the hot potato game of who gave the orders (it is always mutual and collusive) - all this suggests why, when George Bush outlined at Camp David his intended responses to 9/11 and some advisors objected that at least some of them violated the Constitution, and the President replied, "The Constitution is nothing but a piece of paper" ... all of this suggests why we find ourselves, these days, with a cynical electorate, impatient with precisely the kinds of insider distinctions that for Daugherty are the end of the game.

This book had a lot of promise. Covert action? Very cool. The problem is, it's horribly written. There's an awful lot of sloppy mistakes and repetition. It's loaded with sentence fragments and poor grammar. (Or, "the sentences are fragments and bad, bad written with.") It doesn't interfere with the substance, and maybe I'm being too particular that I couldn't focus on the subject--but I couldn't. It was obnoxious, distracting, and I finally put the book down about three chapters from the end. I'm even a history major--I'll read anything.

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