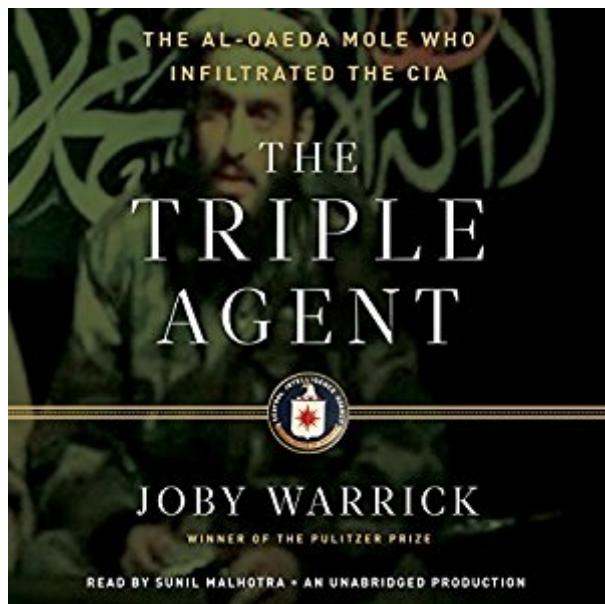


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The Triple Agent: The Al-Qaeda Mole Who Infiltrated The CIA



Synopsis

A stunning narrative account of the mysterious Jordanian who penetrated both the inner circle of al-Qaeda and the highest reaches of the CIA, with a devastating impact on the war on terror. In December 2009, a group of the CIA's top terrorist hunters gathered at a secret base in Khost, Afghanistan, to greet a rising superspy: Humam Khalil al-Balawi, a Jordanian double-agent who infiltrated the upper ranks of al-Qaeda. For months, he had sent shocking revelations from inside the terrorist network and now promised to help the CIA assassinate Osama bin Laden's top deputy. Instead, as he stepped from his car, he detonated a 30-pound bomb strapped to his chest, instantly killing seven CIA operatives, the agency's worst loss of life in decades. In *The Triple Agent*, Pulitzer Prize-winning reporter Joby Warrick takes us deep inside the CIA's secret war against al-Qaeda, a war that pits robotic planes and laser-guided missiles against a cunning enemy intent on unleashing carnage in American cities. Flitting precariously between the two sides was Balawi, a young man with extraordinary gifts who managed to win the confidence of hardened terrorists as well as veteran spymasters. With his breathtaking accounts from inside al-Qaeda's lair, Balawi appeared poised to become America's greatest double-agent in half a century - but he was not at all what he seemed. Combining the powerful momentum of *Black Hawk Down* with the institutional insight of Jane Mayer's *The Dark Side*, Warrick takes the readers on a harrowing journey from the slums of Amman to the inner chambers of the White House in an untold true story of miscalculation, deception, and revenge. From the Hardcover edition

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Customer Reviews

I eagerly awaited the release of this book (on July 19th) and promptly devoured it in two days when it finally popped into my Kindle. I was not disappointed. The author has, in my opinion, assembled an outstanding account of the events leading up to (and subsequent to) the tragic terrorist attack that left several CIA Officers, security personnel, a Jordanian Intelligence Officer, and an Afghan driver dead. Joby Warrick seems to have done an incredible amount of research and interviews for this book, all of which are appropriately cited/footnoted. This book also serves as a great overview of CIA HUMINT and Predator drone operations along the Af-Pak border region and within Pakistan's ungoverned tribal areas. His overview of the Taliban commanders and Haqqani Network personnel was clear, concise, and reminded me of the thorough, yet user-friendly text of Steve Coll's Pulitzer Prize-winning *Ghost Wars*. It is easily the best account to date of US intelligence and military activity in this turbulent region. Warrick also did a commendable job with introducing the reader to the backgrounds and personalities of both the bomber as well as his victims; you will feel like you know them all and will be appropriately outraged and saddened by this operation's outcome. We as readers also get to be flies on the wall for the happenings at CIA Headquarters and at the White House, which places a proper perspective on the entire ill-fated operation and its aftermath. Finally, Warrick's book serves as a way to critically think about all the factors that led up to this attack. Was there too much oversight from CIA's bureaucracy or not enough? Were there too many people involved in this operation or too few? Was CIA too drunk on the excitement of this double agent operation or was their enthusiasm for killing Ayman Al-Zawahiri appropriate and spot-on given the circumstances? I'll keep my opinions to myself -- there's already been enough second guessing on this case -- but if nothing else, this book will make you sincerely grateful for the efforts of those on the front lines of the battle against Al Qaeda and will make you painfully aware of the sacrifices they and their families make. Thank you, to all who serve and thank you, Mr. Warrick, for an outstanding journalistic work.

If you enjoyed "Ghost Wars," "The Looming Tower," and "The Bin Ladens", you'll want to add this to your collection. Warrick dives into extraordinary detail about the events leading up to the attack (and, about the attack itself), given the fact that the book is relatively short - just over 200 pages. I read it this weekend after hearing his recent interview on NPR and was very impressed with both the writing and the research. Yet, this is more than just another book for policy wonks and intelligence geeks. This book is as much about the people on both sides of the battle as it is about the battle itself, and that's its true strength. Warrick gives us an amazing window into the policy

making and operational details leading up to the tragic event, but the book is really about the brave officers from the CIA and Jordanian intelligence playing a deadly game of chess against the malevolent forces of Al-Qadea and the Taliban. Warrick's very moving account of the death notifications and funerals makes this book a real tribute to the fallen. Too often books of this nature focus on indicting administrations and assigning blame. Warrick takes himself out of the book and makes it about the people and the operation - a tough thing to do for many authors in today's partisan and political climate. This book is excellent.

Perhaps the best way to review this book is to state up front what it is not: it is not a scathing critique of CIA or the U.S. Intelligence Community. Those who buy it expecting to be inflamed by a stream of criticisms of CIA officers and trade craft will be disappointed. So what is the book? It is a careful compilation of the events, actions, decisions and personalities that ultimately culminated in the tragedy at Camp Chapman (Khost). Warrick has built a somewhat breathless, but engaging narrative that describes in some detail how a string of seemingly unrelated events build with inevitability of a Greek Tragedy to a horrendous conclusion. Warrick followed what can be called the Bob Woodward style of reporting. That is he reports what is happening without passing judgment on any of the decisions, personalities or actions involved. Indeed one of the more attractive elements of his narrative is that he treats the late Jennifer Matthews with dignity and respect along with a good deal of sympathy. He does the same with CIA 'targeters' like Elizabeth Hanson. He also treats Matthews' murderer Humam al Balawi with equal respect and dignity. This will undoubtedly inflame the legion of real and self-declared counter-terrorism 'experts' who plague the Inner Beltway of D.C. as well as the many armchair foes of Islamic extremism. Yet the first step in developing any rational counter terrorist strategy is understanding who terrorists are. Warrick should be commended for his balanced and fair approach to what is still a highly emotional subject. Although Warrick scrupulously avoids second guessing and judgments of any sort, his account does provide a good deal of evidence that CIA has not dealt with its counter-terrorism mission particularly well. For example his informants appear to conflate the Taliban movements with al Qaeda, treating both Taliban and al Qaeda targets as terrorists (a basic misunderstanding of Pashtun Culture). Also there is no evidence that Warrick presents that CIA analysts made any effort to understand the structure or motivation of either grouping. Now all that being, said being fair and balanced is not the same as being factually accurate. Warrick, like Woodward, was entirely dependent on his informants, many of whom undoubtedly provided him with self serving accounts that may or may not square with the facts. So this book is good start a sorting out the events that ultimately ended in explosion at Khost,

but it will take years for the full truth to be uncovered.

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