

Book Reviews



***Lightning out of Lebanon, Hezbollah Terrorists on American Soil.* By Tom Diaz and Barbara Newman. New York: Presidio Press/Ballantine Books, 234 pages, \$24.95.** Reviewed by Major Keith Everett.

How to find terrorists on American soil should be this book's title. The primary value of this account is the unraveling of a terrorist cell by local and federal law enforcement working together. The terrorist cell was unraveled through the cigarette and drug smuggling investigation tied in with investigating charitable organizations operations financing weapons purchases, high-tech equipment and fraudulent passports. Neither the Feds nor the local and state law enforcement officers would have as much success without the synergistic effect of combining their efforts.

The account is written by two authors, Tom Diaz, an experienced reporter, and Barbara Newman, a producer of documentary films. The overall delivery of this important story is somewhat disjointed as it jumps from the terrorism/criminal investigations to history of Hezbollah, the Ottoman Empire and the faults of FBI intelligence. The two authors did not succeed in telling their story with seamless transitions between what the two of them wrote. Although this makes for jerky reading, it is not a fatal flaw. *Lightning* should be required reading for local, state and federal law enforcement as an outstanding example of how lesser violations can lead to a terrorist organization. Why would a terrorist organization risk involvement in cigarette smuggling? The answer is simple: profits are high without the severe criminal penalties of drug smuggling.

The key person in this story, Mohammed Hammond, describes how he used an asylum claim, then an appeal, to gain time in the United States to develop fraudulent marriage opportunities to get a green card. The authors accurately outline how the United States Immigration Service has a huge Achilles heel in its asylum process. In Hammond's case, the asylum process lasted more than five years! Hammond had

all the time needed to set up a Hezbollah terrorist cell in Charlotte, N.C., at leisure.

The story illuminates some of the key weaknesses of law enforcement intelligence operations and immigration operations. Superb investigative work is evident throughout highlighting key points in combating terrorists. Ken Bell, the lead prosecutor, organized the team effort in prosecuting the many branches of the Charlotte Hezbollah organization. What made terrorist investigation successful was developing criminal cases on each member first. Ready criminal cases gave agents a tool to arrest and detain the members if they decided to flee the country or move. Then the agents were able to develop the terrorism case without fear of losing everything. The Charlotte case was also the first criminal case under the new supporting terrorist organizations law.

The author singles out testimony by then Attorney General John Ashcroft on April 13, 2004, before the Senate Commission investigating the attacks on Sept. 11. Ashcroft testified about a 1995 memo written by Jamie Gorelick, putting even further restrictions on the ability of the intelligence and criminal investigation branches of the Justice Department to cooperate together. The description of how the many obstacles to a complex terrorist investigation were overcome is the most important contribution of this work.

The authors point to two factors crippling the FBI in combating terrorism in the early 1990s. One was the lack of a law against contributing funds or support to terrorist organizations. A law prohibiting this was passed in 1996 and formally signed into law by President Clinton. Although Clinton signed the bill into law, the State Department did not issue the necessary list of designated terrorist organizations for another 16 months. The law was useless without this list, as no one could be charged as supporting a State Department recognized terrorist organization without it. Currently, it is standard practice to disrupt suspected terrorists and deport them as soon as possible. A proactive effort must

have the tools of disruption by prosecution and/or deportation fully available.

One last flaw in the book is the insertion of other criminal cases, some terrorist cases, some not. This distracting method of illustrating a point does not detract from the main story; it just slows it down by adding a touch of confusion here and there. This book, however, is a good starter account for joint terrorism task force members or those interested in disrupting terrorist activity through law enforcement.

***Al-Jazeera: The Inside Story of the Arab News Channel that is Challenging the West.* By Hugh Miles. New York: Grove Press, 426 pages, 2005.** Reviewed by Lieutenant Commander Youssef Aboul-Enein, USN.

In discussions with my fellow Middle East foreign area officers, one thing we all seem to agree on is that this current war against Islamic radicalism is as much a war of ideas as it is an actual combat operation. We may have differing ideas on the Qatari-based Arabic news channel Al-Jazeera, but that should not stop American military planners and leaders operating in the Central Command or European Command areas of operations from learning all they can about the history and evolution of this network.

Hugh Miles is a British freelance journalist who initially spent his childhood in Saudi Arabia and Libya. Fluent in Arabic, Miles has become an up and coming freelance journalist winning the 2000 Times of London Young Journalist Award. His first book looks into the forming of Al-Jazeera in 1996, and how this channel rocked the Arab world by offering programs critical of ruling regimes. The book highlights how Al-Jazeera gained many talented albeit Arab nationalist journalists by sheer luck after a failed Saudi deal to create Orbit TV using Arab journalists from the BBC.

Al-Jazeera, however, did not hit mainstream in its founding year until the French Canal 4 channel mistakenly

programmed an adult movie for 30 minutes on what was supposed to be a family show, beaming the signal into Saudi and Arab Gulf living rooms. This caused a fury in the Persian Gulf, and the French network lost its precious C-band signal. This was a gain for Al-Jazeera, which was then operating on an inefficient H-band signal.

To understand why Al-Jazeera is a success with its shock news TV, you must remember that Arabs had to endure government-controlled television that kept the masses in the dark if not outright lied to them. To learn the truth of the Egyptian crushing defeat in 1967 or even that Saudi Arabia was threatened by Saddam Hussein one had to turn to the BBC or Voice of America radio stations. It is with this background that Al-Jazeera burst onto the scene with political commentary that challenged Arab Nationalism, Islamic customs and much more.

One chapter is devoted to the second Palestinian *intifadah* (uprising), and this chapter alone provides the clearest example of reporting that led to escalating hostilities between Israel and its Arab neighbors. The Arab world was saturated with daily pictures of graphic Palestinian footage and this in turn led to Arab street protests and mob violence that made the shaky regimes of the Middle East nervous and reactionary. Perhaps the more interesting sections of the book is Al-Jazeera reporter Yosri Fouda's 2002 interview with Al-Qaeda September 11 planners Khalid Sheikh Mohammed and Ramzi bin Al-Shaibh; both were captured shortly after their interview. The book details how Fouda got the interview and how both admitted and gloated over the planning and execution of the terrorist acts of September 11th. Both Al-Qaeda leaders acknowledged the fourth hijacked plane was bound for the U.S. Capitol and that ramming nuclear facilities were discussed but dropped for now.

Although I do disagree with some of the author's observations, this book does provide an important look into the media war allies are fighting with Islamic radicalist groups. The book is also a valuable lesson in never losing sight of the rules of war as tragedies such as the Abu Ghuraib prison incident is fuel in for Al-Qaeda's media war against the United States.

***First In: An Insider's Account of how the CIA Spearheaded the War on Terror in Afghanistan.* By Gary C. Schroen. New York: Ballantine Books Inc., 2005, 379 pp. \$25.95 (cloth).** Reviewed by Lieutenant Colonel (Retired) Rick Baillergeon.

When the events of September 11th occurred, Gary Schroen was days away from retiring from the CIA after a 30-year career. Shortly after that, he was asked to meet with Cofer Black, the chief of the Counterterrorist Center (CTC). In the meeting, Black stated, "Gary, I want you to take a small team of CIA officers into Afghanistan. You will link up with the Northern Alliance in the Panjshir Valley, and your job is to convince them to cooperate fully with the CIA and the U.S. military as we go after bin Laden and al-Qa'ida. You will also evaluate their military capabilities and recommend steps we can take to bring the Northern Alliance forces to a state of readiness so they can effectively take on the Taliban forces, opening the way for our efforts against UBL. Gary, this is an incredibly risky assignment, but it is also incredibly important. You are, frankly, the best-qualified officer to lead this team."

First In is Schroen's own story on how he and his team planned, prepared, and executed this highly challenging and critical mission. It is highly detailed, superbly written, and truly engaging. *First In* will fill in the blanks for readers wanting to understand what led to major combat operations in Afghanistan. These strengths make this a book readers will not want to put down and provide them vital new perspectives and information.

Perhaps, the first thing that jumps out to the reader is that the book is atypical of the many books written by CIA operatives and personnel. This difference stems from the amount of detail allowed in the book. As Schroen states in his author's note in describing the book, "The CIA Publications Review Board stated that it is the most detailed account of a CIA field operation told by an officer directly involved that has ever been cleared by the PRB for publication." I have read several other books in this genre and would agree with the amount of detail throughout the pages. There are few occasions in which the reader will wish the author got more into "the

weeds" in a certain area or event.

As expected, Schroen gives his unique perspective on the initial decisions made in the first phase of operations in Afghanistan. These include the use of Special Operations Forces, the location of staging bases, the procurement and transportation of supplies and equipment to the Northern Alliance, and the use of money in dealing with the Northern Alliance. It is all intriguing "stuff" and personally brought many issues to light for me. In fact, the author's discussion on these subjects will bring more value to other books readers may have read on Afghanistan operations.

As mentioned earlier, *First In* gives the reader unprecedented detail in numerous areas. I believe this detail is most significant in Schroen's discussion of the Northern Alliance. I have read many books in this genre and most of them give minimal treatment of the Northern Alliance. Schroen delves into the culture of the society, compares and contrasts the customs of the numerous tribes, and gives superb insight into the personalities of the key tribal leaders. It is the author's ability to provide this information and insight that makes *First In* such a valuable resource to anyone truly wanting to understand the early days of Operation Enduring Freedom.

For the reader, one of the added features of the book is a superb Afterword chapter. Schroen gives the following comments in describing the purpose of this chapter, "The Road ahead for Afghanistan is not an easy one. The problems facing President Karzai and his government are many, and there are no quick or easy solutions available. I am certainly no political expert, and do not pose as one here, but I would like to touch on a few of the key issues facing the Afghan government, discuss some of the pitfalls that lie ahead, and talk about the United States might do to assist." There is no doubt that this conclusion will make readers think and provide them with analysis they have not heard or seen before.

In summary, *First In* is a superb book that is filled with numerous strengths and no noticeable weaknesses. I feel this book fills the void in truly understanding why the events of Operation Enduring Freedom unfolded as they did. Anyone who would like to possess this insight should read *First In*!