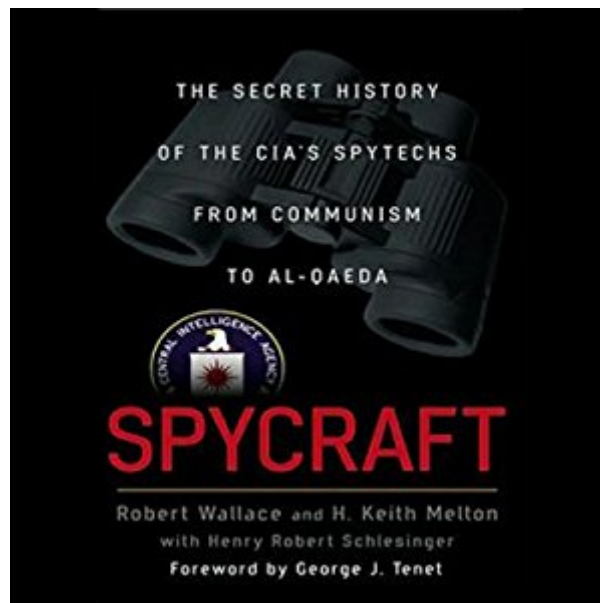


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Spycraft: The Secret History Of The CIA's Spytechs From Communism To Al-Qaeda



Synopsis

In this the first book ever written about the CIA's Office of Technical Service, former director Robert Wallace (a real-life Q, straight out of the James Bond films) and internationally renowned intelligence historian H. Keith Melton offer an unprecedented look at the CIA's most secretive operations and the devices that made them possible. Against a backdrop of geopolitical tensions-including the Cold War, the Cuban Missile Crisis, and the current War on Terror-the authors show how the CIA carries out its missions employing amazingly inventive tools. Illustrated with images never before seen by the public-and featuring everything from micro cameras to wired kitties to exploding pancakes-Spycraft is both a fantastic encyclopedia of gadgetry and a revealing primer on the fundamentals of high-tech espionage. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

One of the most important periods of modern history was that of the Cold War, between 1945-1991. This war was unconventional, and it was mainly hidden from the public on both sides of the conflict. The main action took place in the field of intelligence. The main players in this war of mirrors-the Great Game of the 20th century-were spies. I have maintained for a long time that it was the secret services of the East and the West that were responsible for preventing a Third World War. Paradoxically, this was achieved by this hidden war which was played in the misty dead drop sites of Berlin, Vienna, Moscow, Washington, London and other less famous espionage sites. These were the heydays of hundreds of thousands of spooks-some more famous than the others. Most of

them- especially the professional ones- have used a variety of means in order to accomplish their assignments successfully. In a very interesting and detailed book- perhaps the best there is today on this fascinating subject- the two authors elaborate on the many gadgets the CIA has developed and employed in this battle of wits. There was a special department within the CIA which was responsible for this. What was considered to dwell only in the imagination of authors and scriptwriters was for real. The mentors of the CIA (and its predecessor -the OSS) were their British cousins who have taught their colleagues some useful lessons in the field of espionage. The CIA have surpassed their masters creating for many decades a miscellany of low-and especially high-tech astounding ,innovative technologies. Among them there were cameras, microphones, concealment devices, physical and psychological disguises, ivory letter-opening devices, combustible notebooks, special dead drop rocks, microdot viewers, audio transmitters and bugs. Even animals, such as: bats, cats and rats were employed in this world of clandestine operations. We get a detailed story about the modus operandi of two of the most famous spies who worked for the West: Oleg Penkovsky and his "worthy successor" Adolf Tolkachev. Both of them saved the US Intelligence and taxpayer billions of dollars. The book has two main sections. The first one is about the spytechs and the second is about the fundamentals of the spycraft. My main reservation about this book is about its editing which was done -somehow- perfunctorily. However, you will enjoy every page of this reliable, impeccably -searched, readable, fascinating and revealing book. The real bonus is an array of never-before-seen photos and diagrams and the authors' message is conveyed clearly: without this kind of James-Bond's-Q-masterminded technology, the West would have lost the Cold War. The other thing is this: in our Digital Age everything becomes obsolete in a very short time, thus ,those engaged in this trade should never stop racking their brains in order to create novel devices to be used against the adversary. This book is a must-read for pros and buffs of espionage and Cold War history.

What lead me to buy Spycraft originally was some spurious browsing about "Numbers stations" and this eventually led to a site that referred to this title as offering some insights. ... So was there much (if anything) in here about number stations? Nope; maybe 2 pages. Still, what lead me here and what the description said I would get were wildly different so I'm not that disappointed. I think this book is fascinating, it's like a sudoku puzzle with very little hints. Its filled with intrigue and deception and that's just the writing style. There seem to be so many statements where something is said only for you to think: "hold on, if that was then and there was 10 years lead over commercial, what does that mean for now?" and of course there are no answers. So the style is great and right where it

should be for this style of book. There was at least one review on that mentioned this was quite dry in places. I tend to disagree. This isn't a Tom Clancy novel, but considering how much potential there was for this to be dreadful, I think the authors did very well indeed. That doesn't mean this is a thrill a minute, but it maintains a consistent pace with lots of great insights and correction over the embellishments that Mission Impossible and James Bond offer. Overall, it probably is actually closest to early Tom Clancy stuff, without the story line. Also, the title is honest and doesn't avoid saying that the CIA has made mistakes. Some instances it accepts it as a CIA issue, others they were following orders, and other instances again things just didn't work out for unknown reasons. Overall this makes the book feel honest and what you get is a decently lengthy book with the bulk being 25 chapters on operational procedure and technology as well as the history thereof. There isn't a great overwhelming depth to it in terms of politics, and although there is plenty of detail, it doesn't get bogged down in setting the scene of why an operation was happening so much as what the meat of the operation was. In many ways that is what I feel stopped the book from becoming dry, because really, that's not what this title should be about. Who will enjoy this title? I suspect young adults and teenagers will probably get the most out of it, because although it sets the record straight as far as what the CIA and other organisations could do, it does keep a lot of the magic there, albeit slightly different magic. Also keep in mind that this book is focused on technology and techniques that are either well known or slightly outdated, and for the most part clearly so. So the primary timeframe for most of this is Cold War, with some forays into more current events, however these are few and very quick. I don't think this should be disappointing, but expected, still given the lack of political context this might be very confusing for very young people who don't know about the Cold War. Overall I really enjoyed the title, it read at a decent pace which was much better than I expected, and was definitely worth the time. On the whole I would say the content matched my expectation and I'd argue that really is a great outcome for the authors, not because of my high expectations but because they presented their material well to give a sense of there not being loose ends.

I really enjoyed the history and nuts and bolts of real spycraft. I didn't know how much I didn't know about even pop-culture spy fiction like James Bond has some basis in reality. And how the fantasy elements of 007 drove the spy gadget creators crazy. Adds a whole new layer to Mission Impossible (the tv series) on netflix. Oh, they're doing a dead drop here, that's a one-time pad there, etc. Also, makes Tinker, Tailor, Spy (the movie) totally make sense.

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