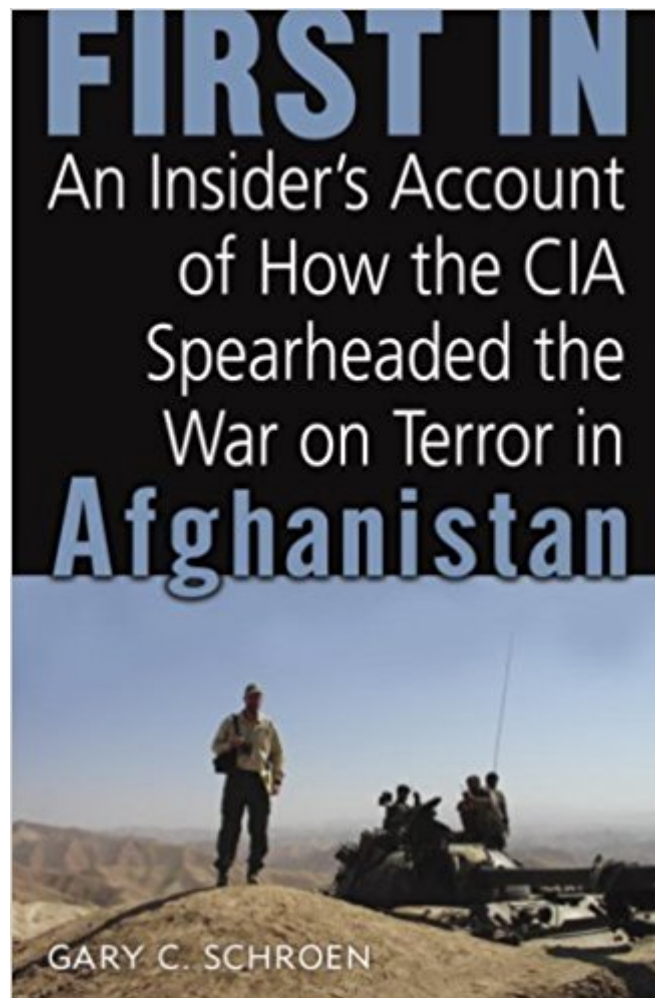




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First In: How Seven CIA Officers Opened The War On Terror In Afghanistan



Synopsis

While America held its breath in the days immediately following 9/11, a small but determined group of CIA agents covertly began to change history. This is the riveting first-person account of the treacherous top-secret mission inside Afghanistan to set the stage for the defeat of the Taliban and launch the war on terror. As thrilling as any novel, *First In* is a uniquely intimate look at a mission that began the U.S. retaliation against terrorism and reclaimed the country of Afghanistan for its people. From the Hardcover edition.

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Customer Reviews

This is the first in a series of books documenting the war on Al Qaeda from the perspective of a CIA officer sent post-9-11 with the express mission to destroy the terrorists, their support, uproot the Taliban and bring to justice those who inflicted terrible pain on The United States. First let me say this book brought back a lot of memories of those days after the attack. It's a very interesting many years late to review how we felt, how our leaders thought, and still feel the sting of

the attack on our nation. Two hundred years from now people will still be reviewing the historical record. It is for this reason I am most pleased to have read this book. The author was unique in the sense that he had experience in the region prior to the events that brought him there post-9-11. Because of his contacts and his knowledge of language and culture he was ideal to bring an alliance of tribes inline in order to destroy the enemy. This book deals prodromently with that event. There is no lack of action. But the book does deal with the important issues of rapidly bringing the war to Al Qaeda. This war developed rapidly and the quality of management needed to ensure its success is quite remarkable. Ultimately this book merges with another book Jawbreaker: The Attack on Bin Laden and Al Qaeda: A Personal Account by the CIA's Key Field Commander by Gary Berntsen who takes what was built by Gary Schroen. There's more physical action in this book. But none-the-less the books provide an inside view of those dark days. Over all this is a very interesting book about the war in Afghanistan. If you enjoyed this then I would strongly suggest Hank Crumpton's book The Art of Intelligence: lessons from a Life in the CIA's clandestine service as they both deal with direct intervention in Afghanistan. I would also recommend Hard Measures by Jose A Rodriguez as a primer for what happens when you have key assets with information derived from the battle field. All four of the books create an historical record of the CIA's activities. Well, at least what they will release to the public. There is always a "rest of the story" some place waiting to be read.

Unlike many reviewers, I wasn't expecting some spy thriller or a military action novel. But I did expect for such an important book to have received more attention in editing. As you can tell from the description and other reviews, the book is a very frank account of the CIA's initial foray into Afghanistan after 9/11. The author has first hand experience, as he led the effort. But he's not a great writer. He repeats himself so much that I got the feeling he wrote the chapters at long intervals, and never went back to re-read what he'd done. A good editor would have smoothed out the flow and eliminated the retelling of the same facts over and over. And a good proofreader would have caught the typos, which were numerous enough as to be distracting (Schroen spells GPS as GSP a few times, which left me wondering "OK, he told us about the GPS team in the last chapter, but what's the GSP team? Is that the same guys, or is he talking about something else?"). I suspect the publisher was rushed to get the book to market. That said, it was an interesting story, which gave me insight into the strange military and political history of Afghanistan.

A great account of how things actually unfolded in those first months and years following 9/11. There's some very insightful opinion here, but the book primarily focuses on the facts - to include how we let Bin Laden escape Tora Bora for his long (if recent ended) life on the run. I worked on this issue, as a senior CT intelligence officer for the "other" major intelligence agency (DIA) and this book does a great job discussing things most of us aren't allowed to talk about. I'd definitely recommend this read, even if it is a bit dated at the time of this review.

This is a one of a kind source on the first weeks of the war. Avid readers on the topic or people in the know might feel certain areas are occasionally glossed over, or downplayed, but what can you expect from an agency officer edited by agency editors? It's not a serious issue, and happens mostly in the background info - 'Ghost Wars' by Steve Coll is a great companion for this if you need a more critical account of the CIA. Besides that, this is fantastic and irreplaceable. It's remarkable how consistently people involved in the Afghan war think (read: know firsthand) that Iraq was a mistake.

You almost feel like you are there with Gary as they mold their lives around the reality of dealing with politics and a culture very different from the lives they left at home.

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