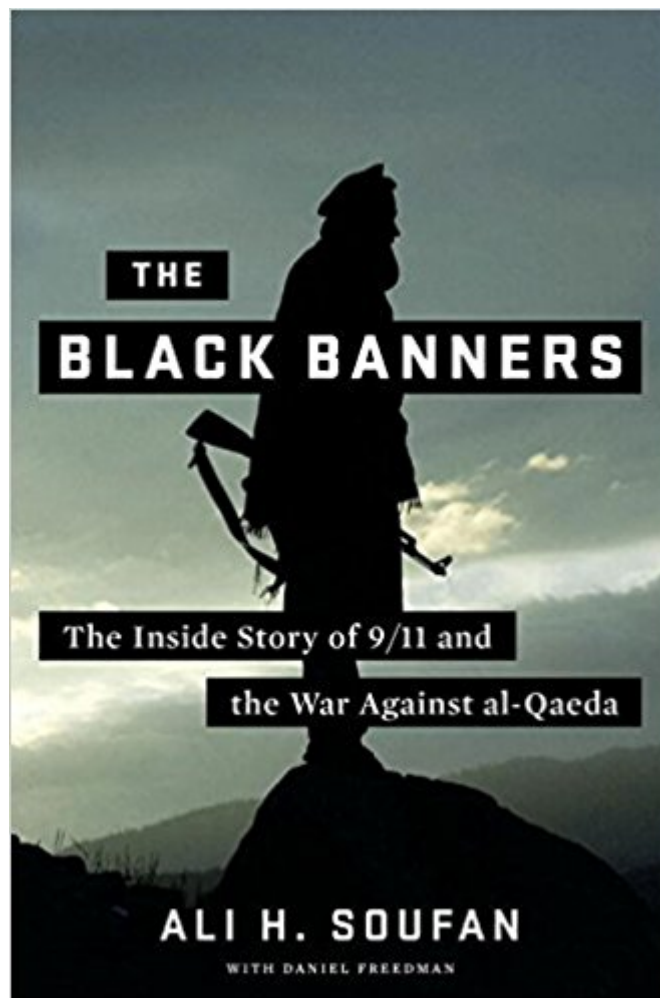




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The Black Banners: The Inside Story Of 9/11 And The War Against Al-Qaeda



Synopsis

A book that will change the way we think about al-Qaeda, intelligence, and the events that forever changed America. On September 11, 2001, FBI Special Agent Ali H. Soufan was handed a secret file. Had he received it months earlierâ€”when it was requestedâ€”the attacks on New York and Washington could have been prevented. During his time on the front lines, Soufan helped thwart plots around the world and elicited some of the most important confessions from terrorists in the war against al-Qaedaâ€”without laying so much as a hand on them. Most of these stories have never been reported before, and never by anyone with such intimate firsthand knowledge. This narrative account of America's successes and failures against al-Qaeda is essential to an understanding of the terrorist group. We are taken into hideouts and interrogation rooms. We have a ringside seat at bin Laden's personal celebration of the 9/11 bombings. Such riveting details show us not only how terrorists think and operate but also how they can be beaten and brought to justice. 16 pages of black-and-white illustrations

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"one of the most valuable and detailed accounts of its subject to appear in the past decade." -- The Economist
"an absorbing account of America's fightback after 9/11, full of revealing or amusing details ... cheering as well as fascinating, because it reveals the dedication of those who defend us, as well as the weird frailties of those who try to kill us." -- The Sunday Times
"Most Americans first heard of FBI agent Ali H. Soufan in the spring of 2009. That's when he testified from behind

a black curtain in the Senate Judiciary Committee's hearing room | The testimony was explosive | Now Soufan has fired another salvo | detailed descriptions of what unfolded behind the closed doors of the world's interrogation rooms | Soufan's story provides a new and important window on America's battle with al-Qaeda. • --Washington Post

œTo those inside the U.S. government Soufan has long been something of a legend. He conducted the most effective and fruitful interrogations of Al Qaeda suspects during the war on terrorism, and save for some inexplicable failures by the CIA, he and his team might well have prevented 9/11. Soufan has since left the FBI and written a gripping account of his experiences, brimming with details about Al Qaeda and its historical development. • --Harpers Magazine

"It is packed with facts that rarely, if ever, have appeared in the media; and it is written in an anecdotal style reminiscent of a Tom Clancy espionage thriller that is easy and enjoyable to read." - Middle East Policy Council

"Superb. An education. And the best book on al Qaeda out there, bar none." - Robert Baer, former CIA official and author of See No Evil, Sleeping with the Devil, and The Devil We Know.

"Unfortunately, we only have one Ali Soufan. Had American intelligence listened to him, 9/11 might never have happened. No one did more to unravel the story of al-Qaeda than Ali Soufan. Thankfully, he's left another legacy in this book. Anyone who wants to know what really happened should read it. It's an inspiring but wrenching story told from the heart of a great American." - Lawrence Wright, author of The Looming Tower: Al-Qaeda and the Road to 9/11

Soufan supports his narrative with sources of documented information generally from the "intelligence" community. Much of the documentation comes from the 9/11 Commission and is found in the Commission's Report. I start with this statement because while listening to Soufan's narrative, I shake my head, my fist and yell expletives. Soufan's book plays no favorites when disclosing lost opportunities and poor handling of international terrorism. Too many talking heads with too little information and too much power is the conclusion reached. I have worked for governments my entire career and am painfully aware of decisions made by leaders removed from the front line. As well, I have experienced government decision making by Attorneys whose concerns are generally avoiding liability or telling their Boss how to use the law for their own purposes. Thank you Ali Soufan for documenting your journey; if American's use the opportunity to read/listen to Black Banners they will know, to question, always question. On a personal note, I always suspected a "shadow government" in the George W. Administration and whether Soufan connects lines directly, the dots are most certainly on the paper to do so.

An excellent book. Mr. Soufan has an excellent grasp of the art of speaking with "bad guys". Some will disagree, but this is an excellent model/methodology for military, intelligence and law enforcement to adopt in many circumstances. One thing I found somewhat unsettling is the political responses to many of the situations. While the political machine need be involved in policy, they should leave the execution of certain actions to professionals; be they Law Enforcement, intelligence or military. Another glaring point is the need for cross collaboration verses territorialism. I highly recommend this book, it is an excellent read. One thing I would recommend is looking at the pages in the back to understand the players. A relationship diagram would have been extremely helpful

Update December 2016 With the election of Donald Trump and the incredible spread of ISIS which now extends from Central Africa to the Chinese border and Stockholm to Indonesia to Manila to Los Angeles to Orlando there's bound to be some major shifts in US policy from the top to the bottom. This book should be on every policymakers and commentators must read list in order to more competently interpret both the threats and the potential strategies and policies. *****This is a must read for every citizen with an interest in this critical subject. Most of us who are interested in the area are subject to the mini specials and talking head babble which imparts no real wisdom or books with a more limited vision. The Black Banners is detailed, visionary and written from the view of someone who really knows the subject but is not trying to defend either himself or some political view. Probably the greatest takeaway is the potential effectiveness of a skilled interrogator working without the "enhanced techniques". The author makes a highly convincing case that skill triumphs over blunt force. I'm also reminded of James Stockdale's writing (In Love and In War) on his years of torture in N Vietnamese prisons. The prisoners came to realize that most anything could be tortured out of them but that the goal was to provide as little as possible in each session and to include some misleading information. Stockdale was also very clear that he would not allow himself to be captured again. The book focuses on the author's participation in many of the investigations and the frustrations of working with the CIA and Whitehouse on many occasions. I think the book fails to cover the many problems within the FBI leading up to 9-11 including he obsession with prosecutions , perhaps at the expense of prevention, the corruption within the FBI where very senior officials were promoted after obstructing investigations and the all too close relationship between the FBI and Clinton whitehouse. The exclusion of these issues from the book appears to be more

related to what the author was doing rather than any attempt to cover the events. The memos from field agents pleading for help from HQ to investigate potential terrorist flight training and others asking for assistance in obtaining warrants to search computers document the failures. The first 1/3 of the book is well worth the price of the whole book. If there is a downside it is the heavy hand of the censors and the redacted material. While I chafe at the deletions and such, I appreciate that immense value of what may seem to many to be harmless scraps of information regarding what we knew, how we gather information and how we process information. In retrospect I believe most of us are pained at the emphasis on development of evidence for prosecution rather than collection of intelligence to identify and eliminate threats. The writing is refreshingly clear and focused. Perhaps it reflects the years spent in the preparation of briefing and action memos. The drama comes from the facts presented, not an excess of words. I originally borrowed the book from the Santa Monica library but before I returned it I ordered a copy from to keep as a reference. Highly recommended

While the book itself was very good, I found that at least 20% of this book focuses on Soufan's self inflated view. The things that he should've redacted from the book include all the parts where he is right as the best FBI investigator/interrogator of all time, while anything and everything the CIA ever did was wrong. It makes it seem like the CIA and the military don't contribute anything to the counterterrorism fight either overseas or domestically. In fact, he makes it seem as though the only people who do anything right are certain FBI agents, of them, first and foremost, himself. Aside from that 20%, the rest of the book is a very easy read, and easy to follow. It actually brings to light a few far from commonly known facts about the counterterrorism fight currently and ever evolving in America. Overall, a good read with a couple of quibbles.

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