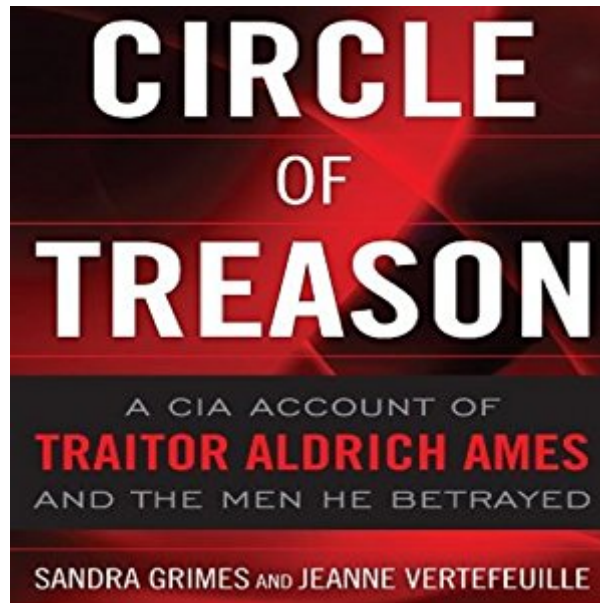


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Circle Of Treason: CIA Traitor Aldrich Ames And The Men He Betrayed



Synopsis

While there have been other books about Aldrich Ames, *Circle of Treason* is the first account written by CIA agents who were key members of the CIA team that conducted the intense "Ames Mole Hunt." Sandra Grimes and Jeanne Vertefeuille were two of the five principals of the CIA team tasked with hunting one of their own and were directly responsible for identifying Ames as the mole, leading to his arrest and conviction. One of the most destructive traitors in American history, CIA officer Aldrich Ames provided information to the Soviet Union that contributed to the deaths of at least ten Soviet intelligence officers who spied for the United States. In this book, the two CIA officers directly responsible for tracking down Ames chronicle their involvement in the hunt for a mole. Considering it their personal mission, Grimes and Vertefeuille dedicated themselves to identifying the traitor responsible for the execution or imprisonment of the Soviet agents with whom they worked. Their efforts eventually led them to a long-time acquaintance and coworker in the CIA's Soviet-East European division and Counterintelligence Center, Aldrich Ames. Not only is this the first book to be written by the CIA principals involved, but it is also the first to provide details of the operational contact with the agents Ames betrayed. The book covers the political aftermath of Ames's arrest, including the Congressional wrath for not identifying him sooner, the FBI/CIA debriefings following Ames's plea bargain, and a retrospective of Ames the person and Ames the spy. It is also the compelling story of two female agents, who overcame gender barriers and succeeded in bringing Ames to justice in a historically male-oriented organization. Now retired from the CIA, Grimes and Vertefeuille are finally able to tell this inside story of the CIA's most notorious traitor and the men he betrayed.

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Customer Reviews

One of the most revealing, authentic and long-awaited books yet published about Ames case written by two CIA veterans with direct knowledge of many dramatic episodes of the Cold War. The authors - Vertefeuille & Grimes - two tenacious and experienced CIA officers made a superb team (supported by many other colleagues) and wrote, with authority and conviction, a book with many priceless stories. What makes this book so compelling is that almost every word is true, but, by no means, a complete picture of many Cold War episodes, as you can see below. The book starts in the first two chapters with a personal description of authors' careers, a fine team as I said, after a short, but explanatory, preface. In chapter three we were provided with an insightful look and general overview of SE (Soviet and East European) division operations. Starting with chapter 4 and continuing with the next two, we're providing with the best account about Polyakov case, the GRU general receiving a special attention from the authors and a special dedication at the beginning of the book. The facts are as detailed as possible, but omitted one important factor - the death of one of Polyakov's sons in US, because he was not allowed, by his superiors, to carry out a life-saving surgical operation in a US hospital (Cherkashin & Feifer/Spy Handler) a fact emerging in revenge on the Soviet system, a key element in supporting his double life. I liked the story of Walt Lomac, an example of personal integrity, in the clash with his CIA superiors about Polyakov bona fide (page 33-34). Major spy cases are presented in a genuine manner in the next two chapters (40 pages) summarizing the activities of Kulak, Chernov, Poleshuk, Piguzov, Yuzhin among others, actually the most valuable CIA network in history. Speaking about B. Yuzhin I noticed, for the first time in the public domain, "the contribution" of FBI's Pitts in this case. Vertefeuille & Grimes related with accuracy and in fascinating detail each case and I believe that no one knows as much background on these cases as they. Chapters 9-16 are dedicated to the first reactions to the losses of 1985, gradually focusing on Ames investigation specifically. The last chapters are more analytical describing Ames (as person and as spy), a comparison between Ames and Hanssen - a fascinating look into the minds of these two characters and concluding with "Final thoughts", a chapter filled with substantial evidence of a somehow troubled US intel community. The book did not spare criticizing some key figures of SE division - for example, M. Bearden's activity receiving a particular "scrutiny" (page 19, 100, 133, 211 etc). The interval between pages 194-207 is filled with an extremely valuable Chronology, a true intelligence

history of events and main characters. The book is well supported by 18 B&W photos showing the main characters of the book (5 are with Polyakov). There is a useful and short notes section and bibliography to indicate the sources of various statements, so the readers can verify their accuracy, consider the context, or follow them further. There is also a comprehensive index. In searching for a title to my review I was about to write "a complete study", but few "anomalies" convinced me to change my mind. Occasionally, I also did not like the switching between first and third person, often in a very confusing manner. (sometimes a third "person" is speaking about the authors!) Firstly, there are no accounts about the help of a Russian defector in capturing Ames, a deliberate omission, in my opinion. The authors gave no details about the defector's support - providing no name, but dates, places and times that meshed with the background of Ames - a fact mentioned in two books (Bearden&Risen/The Main Enemy and Cherkashin&Feifer/Spy Handler) and named by R. Kessler (The secrets of the FBI) as being Alexander Zaporozhsky, one of the four Western spies involved in the July 2010 spy swap. This man truly deserves a book for the story of his life. Another intriguing account referred to the fate of V. Vetrov, the famous "Farewell". It is hard to believe - after reading several books and professional opinions - that Vetrov, as KGB veteran, made the stupid mistake to confess his spying to an unknown person (in prison!), the story so frequently stated in earlier books about this case. Much closer to the truth, I believe, is that he was betrayed by someone in the CIA (Bearden) or DST/DGSE (Kalugin). Thirdly, the fact that both traitors were discovered with the help of ex-KGB/SVR agents was not included in chapter 18 - A comparison between Ames and Hanssen, obviously also a deliberate omission. Eventually, throughout the book, the authors are not addressing rumors of an undiscovered KGB spy - another Ames or Hanssen - still at large in the US intel community, the so-called "the fourth mole", an interesting episode confirmed by both Bearden (as one involved in the investigations) and Cherkashin (who, as KR line chief, should have direct knowledge or could be the handler of this spy). However, inside the book (page 72) there are a few tidbits about some anomalies represented by O. Gordievsky and S. Bokhan cases. In later case, it is not clear when he was recruited (1975/page 97 or 1976/page 72 and 196); also, in some studies, Gordievsky is suspected that he was recruited as back as 1966, SIS taking over in 1974. Written by two fine and skilled storytellers as a lesson in the murky world of intelligence during Cold War, this book is a remarkable and major contribution to the literature of espionage that treats spy wars between KGB/SVR and CIA. For every serious student who likes dead-serious nonfiction books it should be a required and indispensable reading. Five stars and recommended!

CI investigation is an art form carried out by experts. It is not a science and throwing money and

unqualified personnel or helpers at such a problem does not guarantee or even improve the chances of success. ..Luck is involved--While there are several 'must haves' for a successful CI investigation, knowledge of the target organization, in this case the LGB, is paramount. We had to be experts on the personnel, organization, tradecraft, and operational philosophy of the KGB to have a chance of success. Sandra Grimes/ Jeanne Vertefeuille "Circle of Treason: A CIA Account of Traitor Aldrich Ames"First things first: Sandra Grimes and Jeanne Vertefeuille, the two CIA professionals most central to the uncovering of the CIA's most calamitous traitor, Aldrich "Rick" Ames, have produced an insider's description of the case which clearly outclasses five earlier treatments by outside authors, whose access was limited. Their analysis is certain to become the classic description of this treason which resulted in catastrophic damage to CIA's Moscow operations and the deaths of at least eight CIA agents. They tell not just the Ames case but embed it in a compendium of all the major Soviet KGB and diplomatic agents who worked for the CIA and FBI in this period. They are candidly critical of the FBI, especially the bungled surveillance of Edward Lee Howard, but equally censorious of many CIA misadventures--of which there were many including constant breakdown of compartmentalization. They forthrightly (remember the book was subject to the Agency's standard pre-publication "review") offer their pantheon of heroes--Soviet Division Chief Burton Gerber; Gus Hathaway; Paul Raymond; Ray Reardon; Dan Payne. And in their view the hapless--DCI Bill Casey; SE Chief Milt Bearden; and, worst of all, CIA's Counterintelligence chief, James Jesus Angleton. All of these are familiar figures to everybody in the CIA. The book might equally have been entitled "Handbook on CIA," for it provides details on internal structure and the true names of many operatives long considered classified. Jeanne and Sandy (as they call themselves in the book) offer delightful accounts of their recruitment to the Agency, and how in the 50's women were deemed fit only for the typing pool, not professional intelligence operatives. What eventually brought them together was their Russian language and they ended up in the SR (Soviet Russia) division. Of particular interest is their insider's view of the "maze of double and triple-think" which developed in the wake of the defection of the KGB's Anatoliy Golitsyn and subsequently Yuriy Nosenko. The unpardonable treatment of Nosenko is not only a huge debacle for the Agency but led to a vast witch hunt--led by Angleton--for a 'mole' in the Soviet section. This was dubbed the "Monster Plot" by skeptics who baptized the subscribers to this plot theory the "Black Hats." "According to the Monster theory, every CIA or FBI success against the Soviet target was really KGB success, with the KGB controlling the operation from beginning to end--misleading, confusing, and deceiving the naïve Americans." The "Black Hats" virtually paralyzed operations against Soviet targets for a decade and shattered the careers of CIA officers. Operations

against the Soviets appeared to be going splendidly until suddenly in late May 1985 the Soviets began rolling up, one after another, all the Agency's Moscow assets, arrested and executed. DCI Casey designated John Stein to do a report. Parallel to this, Burton Gerber, recognizing by November the CIA faced a huge problem, instituted his own personal crusade to explain the arrests. A series of clever ploys made clear the problem was not with communications. In November 1989 a seemingly innocuous tidbit emerged which was to play a major role in catching Ames. A colleague of the authors who had known Ames in Mexico remarked how he suddenly seemed to have acquired a lot of money. Operating on the basis of "follow the money" the investigative team discovered unusually large bank deposits by Ames. A variety of indicators suggested a polygraph, which Ames took--and due in part to his ability to talk his way out of conflicts--and passed. The final phase began in early 1991 when Jeanne was authorized to revisit the 1985 losses in Moscow. The Agency set up a Special Investigation Unit--which diplomatically reached out to the sometimes cantankerous FBI for cooperation, eventually establishing excellent working relations with some agents. The first list of possible suspects they put together included 160 names. Despite this enormous number, members of the team were generally agreed that Ames was likely their man. Still, the investigation involved scanning thousands of documents and a whole litany of other time consuming and labor intensive efforts. One major problem was that Ames, in his normal assignment of recruiting KGB officers, was allowed to meet and fraternize with them. Thus his job provided cover for his espionage operations. Financial records remained critical. At one point reviewing the latest deposits, Redmond exclaimed, "Rick is a goddamn Russian spy." The CIA's extensive investigation paid off in May 1993 when the FBI took over for a criminal investigation. A combination of personal surveillance, cameras and other data prompted the bureau to act: On 21 February 1994, Ames was enticed on a ruse to the office and arrested. His wife, Rosario, was also later taken into custody. The authors' last chapter, "Final Thoughts" is of particular interest given their decades of experience and insight. They cautioned future investigators to write more memoranda to cover themselves when, as happened, Congress asks questions such as why the CIA inquiry didn't proceed more quickly. They admonished themselves for not catching on to "follow the money" earlier. They advised successors to be more forthright with Congress with periodic updates. Especially arresting, however, is the authors recognition that the challenges of counterintelligence have changed dramatically since the Cold War. They realize they worked in a simpler world than we have now. The Soviet Union was the enemy; there were no moral ambiguities. Now targets are scattered, amorphous, discrete, non-governmental. "We could concentrate our efforts on one country and one government. Alas, the colleagues who have come

after us do not have that luxury." (Jeanne Vertefeuille died in December, 2012.)

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