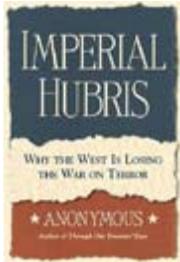


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The Surprising Publication of a CIA Insider's Harsh Critique of U.S. Terror Tactics:

A Review Of Imperial Hubris: Why The West Is Losing The War on Terror

By [MARK S. ZAID](#)

Friday, Oct. 15, 2004

Anonymous, [Imperial Hubris: Why the West is Losing the War on Terrorism](#) (Brassey's Inc., 2004)

Al Qaeda will attack the continental United States again. Its strike will be far more destructive than that witnessed on September 11, 2001. It may even include weapons of mass destruction.

Or so we are told, repeatedly, by the recent book [Imperial Hubris: Why the West is Losing the War on Terrorism](#). Indeed, the author is at times so pessimistic that he notes there may not be an opportunity for any errors in his book to be corrected, if the U.S. government continues to underestimate Osama bin Laden.

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According to the author, "Anonymous," the problem with the existing war against terrorism is that "U.S. leaders refuse to accept the obvious: We are fighting a worldwide Islamic insurgency -- not criminality or terrorism -- and our policy and procedures have failed to make more than a modest dent in enemy forces."

The author is self-admittedly driven by anger and frustration over what he believes are the government's missed opportunities for dealing with the al Qaeda threat, and its basic misconceptions as to how to do so. Not everyone will have the stomach for his tough analysis -- and politically correct politicians, in particular, may shy away. But anyone who has an interest in the debate surrounding how to address these problems must read this book.

Even more interesting than the book itself, however, is the fact that it was allowed to be published in the first place.

The Book's Central Argument: We Are Losing the War on Terror

To understand why publication was so unlikely - and surprising - in this case, it is important first to summarize the book's basic contentions relating to the war on terror.

To begin, "Anonymous" believes that even the mass killing of "our Muslim foes" will be simply insufficient for the West to prevail in the war on terror. Also necessary will be destruction of infrastructure reminiscent of General Sherman's Civil War raid on Atlanta - which will result in heavy U.S. military, and innocent foreign civilian, casualties.

"Anonymous" also contends that the American people must get beyond their increasing fixation with individual U.S. military deaths. Our military, he points out, are professional soldiers who must go where they are needed, and die if necessary.

Additionally, "Anonymous" condemns the Bush Administration's decision to invade Iraq in 2003, and lambastes policy officials for trying to create a Western-style democracy in Afghanistan.

Finally, he contends that it is a grave mistake for senior government officials to argue "that Muslims hate and attack us for what we are and think, rather than for what we do." It is U.S. actions, he argues, that draw wrath - not American freedoms.

Who Is "Anonymous"? We Now Know

Who is this mysterious author with such a harsh outlook?

The publisher's Website still describes him only as "a senior U.S. civil servant with nearly two decades of experience in the U.S. intelligence community's work on Afghanistan and South Asia." In addition, an initial press release noted that the "U.S. government agency at which this author is employed required that 'approval for this manuscript is predicated upon the author maintaining his anonymity and also that his association with the Agency is not disclosed.'"

But now the author's identity and employer are no longer a secret. Several media outlets identified him as Michael Scheuer -- a 22 year veteran (overt, not covert) analyst employed by the CIA. Scheuer - who formerly served as the Station Chief for the CIA's Bin Laden desk - unquestionably knows his subject matter.

Why was Scheuer anonymous in the first place? The reason is not clear.

Initially, the CIA suggested Scheuer himself requested anonymity, particularly because of an alleged risk of making him an al Qaeda target. But in fact, it turns out that Scheuer never wanted to be anonymous. Although Scheuer had published an earlier book also as "Anonymous", nevertheless, that still begs the question why?

Why Did the CIA Allow Scheuer to Publish This Book, Even Anonymously?

But there's an even larger mystery: Why did the CIA allow such a controversial work to be published in the first place? In the book, a current CIA employee openly criticizes the actions of the then current CIA Director and a White House already under siege by the American public for its counter-terrorism policies.

If it had chosen to, the CIA could have easily blocked publication. Every CIA employee, in order to obtain employment, must execute a secrecy agreement pledging not to disclose classified information. The agreement contains a very specific pre-publication review clause that requires the submission of all writings (and oral presentations) that bear any relation to the work undertaken by the individual or their employer. This requirement extends into perpetuity. Breaching the agreement can trigger both civil and criminal penalties.

The CIA has historically sought to unabashedly stifle criticism stemming from former agency employees, whether the information was classified or not.

Even former CIA Directors have fallen victim. In dealing with his book, Secrecy and Democracy, Admiral Stansfield Turner described the process as arbitrary and irresponsible. He charged that the CIA tried to censor portions because of his "book's highly critical view of the Reagan administration's mishandling of our intelligence activities, especially its indifference to any oversight of the CIA."

Former CIA officer Frank Snepp has also experienced the CIA's wrath. Snepp wrote the best-selling book Decent Interval on the Vietnam War, which was published without having undergone prepublication review. Though the CIA claimed the book did not contain classified information, it successfully sued Snepp all the way to the Supreme Court.

In the Court's decision in Snepp v. United States, Snepp was found to have violated his contractual obligations under the terms of his secrecy agreement. Nearly thirty years after the book was first published, every royalty check Snepp earns is turned over to the U.S. government.

So exactly how did Scheuer get his book published?

Given his book's topic, there is no question that Scheuer was required to submit his manuscript for prepublication review. According to the CIA, the manuscript did not contain classified information.

But the analysis does not stop there for current employees like Scheuer. The regulations state clearly that "For current employees and contractors, the Agency may also deny permission to publish statements or expressions of opinion that could reasonably be expected to impair the author's performance of duties, interfere with the authorized functions of the CIA, or have an adverse impact on the foreign relations or security of the United States."

Thus, there is simply no question that the CIA could have prevented the publication of Scheuer's book if it had wanted to do so. And no court would have sided with him until perhaps after he had left the Agency's employ. Even then, the CIA could have delayed publication by years.

Why then did the CIA allow this manuscript to be published? Perhaps because it was the very message some senior CIA officials wanted public after having failed with any effect to convey similar messages privately.

Following Publication The CIA Reverses Its Position

Before and during a period after the book came out, Scheuer was routinely interviewed by the major newspapers and magazines, published op-eds and even appeared on television news interviews (of course while in shadow). The publicity led the book to reach Number 2 on *Amazon.com* and make the bestseller lists of the *New York Times* and *Washington Post*.

By August 7, 2004, though, the CIA changed its tune. Suddenly, Scheuer was required to secure advance permission for any interview; had to submit an outline of intended remarks; and was prohibited from responding to questions regarding intelligence reform. These restrictions are nothing out of the ordinary for current CIA employees. Yet the sudden shift of policy invites questions over whether, at this point, Scheuer had outlived his usefulness to the Agency.

No doubt the CIA was not happy with the contents of a July 31, 2004 letter Scheuer wrote, which was leaked to the press. In the letter, Scheuer harshly rebuked the conclusions of the 9/11 Commission, as well as the CIA itself. Indeed, he complained of failures by "bureaucratic cowards" in the intelligence agencies. He also expressed particular anger that no one had been held directly accountable for September 11th.

Whose Agenda Did The Book Serve?

The criticisms and recommendations presented by Scheuer, who is now considering leaving the CIA, are intelligent and, at times, frightening. Indeed, they are more widespread within the intelligence community than many wish to admit. Only time will tell whether the two primary questions arising from the publication of *Imperial Hubris* will ever be answered. Should the U.S. government heed Scheuer's advice in order to win the war on terror? And for what hidden purpose did the CIA, which never does anything that does not advance its own private agenda, allow a current employee to publish such critical and controversial comments just months before a presidential election?

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