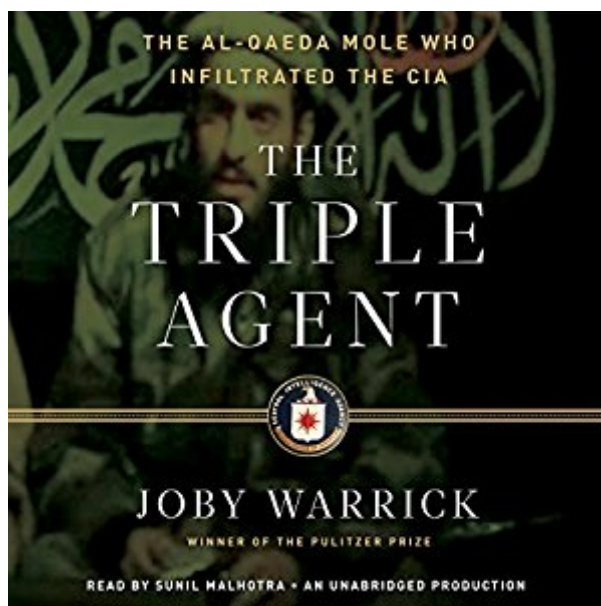


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The Triple Agent: The Al-Qaeda Mole Who Infiltrated The CIA



Synopsis

A stunning narrative account of the mysterious Jordanian who penetrated both the inner circle of al-Qaeda and the highest reaches of the CIA, with a devastating impact on the war on terror. In December 2009, a group of the CIA's top terrorist hunters gathered at a secret base in Khost, Afghanistan, to greet a rising superspy: Humam Khalil al-Balawi, a Jordanian double-agent who infiltrated the upper ranks of al-Qaeda. For months, he had sent shocking revelations from inside the terrorist network and now promised to help the CIA assassinate Osama bin Laden's top deputy. Instead, as he stepped from his car, he detonated a 30-pound bomb strapped to his chest, instantly killing seven CIA operatives, the agency's worst loss of life in decades. In *The Triple Agent*, Pulitzer Prize-winning reporter Joby Warrick takes us deep inside the CIA's secret war against al-Qaeda, a war that pits robotic planes and laser-guided missiles against a cunning enemy intent on unleashing carnage in American cities. Flitting precariously between the two sides was Balawi, a young man with extraordinary gifts who managed to win the confidence of hardened terrorists as well as veteran spymasters. With his breathtaking accounts from inside al-Qaeda's lair, Balawi appeared poised to become America's greatest double-agent in half a century - but he was not at all what he seemed. Combining the powerful momentum of *Black Hawk Down* with the institutional insight of Jane Mayer's *The Dark Side*, Warrick takes the readers on a harrowing journey from the slums of Amman to the inner chambers of the White House in an untold true story of miscalculation, deception, and revenge. From the Hardcover edition

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Customer Reviews

Perhaps the best way to review this book is to state up front what it is not: it is not a scathing critique of CIA or the U.S. Intelligence Community. Those who buy it expecting to be inflamed by a stream of criticisms of CIA officers and trade craft will be disappointed. So what is the book? It is a careful compilation of the events, actions, decisions and personalities that ultimately culminated in the tragedy at Camp Chapman (Khost). Warrick has built a somewhat breathless, but engaging narrative that describes in some detail how a string of seemingly unrelated events build with inevitability of a Greek Tragedy to a horrendous conclusion. Warrick followed what can be called the Bob Woodward style of reporting. That is he reports what is happening without passing judgment on any of the decisions, personalities or actions involved. Indeed one of the more attractive elements of his narrative is that he treats the late Jennifer Matthews with dignity and respect along with a good deal of sympathy. He does the same with CIA 'targeters' like Elizabeth Hanson. He also treats Matthews' murderer Humam al Balawi with equal respect and dignity. This will undoubtedly inflame the legion of real and self-declared counter-terrorism 'experts' who plague the Inner Beltway of D.C. as well as the many armchair foes of Islamic extremism. Yet the first step in developing any rational counter terrorist strategy is understanding who terrorists are. Warrick should be commended for his balanced and fair approach to what is still a highly emotional subject. Although Warrick scrupulously avoids second guessing and judgments of any sort, his account does provide a good deal of evidence that CIA has not dealt with its counter-terrorism mission particularly well.

I eagerly awaited the release of this book (on July 19th) and promptly devoured it in two days when it finally popped into my Kindle. I was not disappointed. The author has, in my opinion, assembled an outstanding account of the events leading up to (and subsequent to) the tragic terrorist attack that left several CIA Officers, security personnel, a Jordanian Intelligence Officer, and an Afghan driver dead. Joby Warrick seems to have done an incredible amount of research and interviews for this book, all of which are appropriately cited/footnoted. This book also serves as a great overview of CIA HUMINT and Predator drone operations along the Af-Pak border region and within Pakistan's ungoverned tribal areas. His overview of the Taliban commanders and Haqqani Network personnel was clear, concise, and reminded me of the thorough, yet user-friendly text of Steve Coll's Pulitzer Prize-winning *Ghost Wars*. It is easily the best account to date of US intelligence and military activity in this turbulent region. Warrick also did a commendable job with introducing the reader to the backgrounds and personalities of both the bomber as well as his victims; you will feel like you know them all and will be appropriately outraged and saddened by this operation's outcome. We as

readers also get to be flies on the wall for the happenings at CIA Headquarters and at the White House, which places a proper perspective on the entire ill-fated operation and its aftermath. Finally, Warrick's book serves as a way to critically think about all the factors that led up to this attack. Was there too much oversight from CIA's bureaucracy or not enough? Were there too many people involved in this operation or too few?

Joby Warrick writes about the Middle East, diplomacy and national security for The Washington Post's National desk. He has covered the intelligence community, WMD proliferation and the environment, and served as a member of the Post's investigative unit. Joby Warrick, in this book, has proved that he is an exceptional writer and storyteller. Joby Warrick delves into the stories and histories of the main characters in this story, and the main agent, known as the 'golden source'. Humam al-Balawi is at the center of this story. He was a reserved young physician in his homeland of Jordan. He and his wife had met in college, married and had two children. He became engrossed in on-line radical groups and became a loud spokesperson, which is how he came to the attention of the Jordanian Intelligence. He was recruited and he was theirs. He was then introduced to the CIA, and he became one of theirs. He met with the Al Qaeda, and, again, he became one of theirs. We also meet Ali bin Zeid, who is a Jordanian intelligence captain, a cousin of King Abdullah II of Jordan, and the only one in the group who had ever met Balawi. And, Darren LaBonte, an ex-Army Ranger who was a CIA officer assigned to the agency's Amman station. Ali Zeid and LaBonte were close friends who often worked cases together. Jennifer Matthews, a career CIA agent, who needed one more good station success to ensure her a high level desk job at Langley. She had some demons to conquer and was assigned as the CIA station chief at Khost, the CIA's operating base in Afghanistan. Baitullah Mehsud, leader of the Pakistani Taliban, a man with an ego as big as his pot belly. He was on a 'wanted list' and was tracked by one of the best. Elizabeth Hanson, a thirty year old member of the CIA. She was a 'looker', blond and lithe.

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