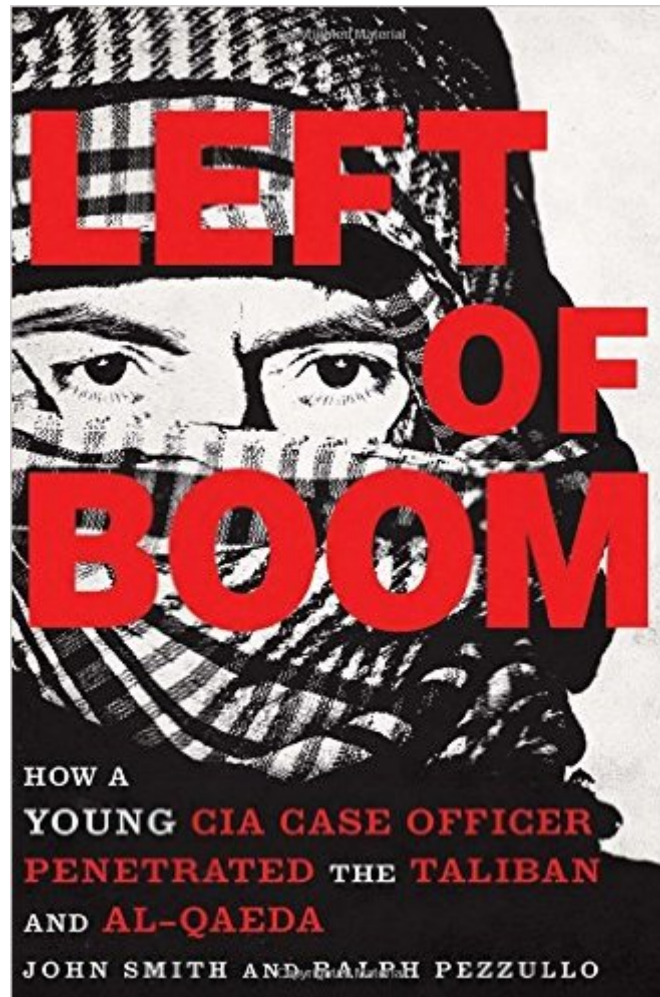


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Left Of Boom: How A Young CIA Case Officer Penetrated The Taliban And Al-Qaeda



Synopsis

The explosive New York Times bestseller! On September 11, 2001, Doug Laux was a freshman in college, on the path to becoming a doctor. But with the fall of the Twin Towers came a turning point in his life. After graduating he joined the Central Intelligence Agency, determined to get himself to Afghanistan and into the center of the action. Through persistence and hard work he was fast-tracked to a clandestine operations position overseas. Dropped into a remote region of Afghanistan, he received his baptism by fire. Frustrated by bureaucratic red tape, a widespread lack of knowledge of the local customs and culture and an attitude of complacency that hindered his ability to combat the local Taliban, Doug confounded his peers by dressing like a native and mastering the local dialect, making contact and building sources within several deadly terrorist networks. His new approach resulted in unprecedented successes, including uncovering the largest IED network in the world, responsible for killing hundreds of US soldiers. Meanwhile, Doug had to keep up false pretenses with his family, girlfriend and friends--nobody could know what he did for a living--and deal with the emotional turbulence of constantly living a lie. His double life was building to an explosive resolution, with repercussions that would have far reaching consequences.

Book Information

Hardcover: 320 pages

Publisher: St. Martin's Press; 1st Edition edition (April 5, 2016)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 125008136X

ISBN-13: 978-1250081360

Product Dimensions: 6.3 x 1.1 x 9.5 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.2 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.0 out of 5 stars Â Â See all reviews Â (154 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #27,999 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #46 in Â Books > Biographies &

Memoirs > Leaders & Notable People > Military > Afghan & Iraq Wars > Afghan War #62

in Â Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Politics & Government > Specific Topics > Intelligence & Espionage

Customer Reviews

I don't usually read this type of book, but I saw the author's AMA on Reddit so I thought I'd give it a try. I'm glad I did. The book offers a fascinating glimpse into one CIA Case Officer's experience trying to take down a major IED network in Afghanistan. Beyond just being a good read, this book

really drives home the personal sacrifices that MANY people make every day to try to bring down terror networks and keep Americans safe. Irrespective of any personal opinions readers may have about the CIA, and the recent conflicts in the middle east, I think this book gives a valuable perspective on what it was like to be an American C/O in one of the most difficult and dangerous places in the middle east. Some have criticized this author for breaking an unwritten 'code of silence' to tell this story - and I wonder if the one-star reviews are primarily driven by this group. Although I respect those opinions, I don't fully understand them - I wish more lower-level operatives would tell their stories so that we get a more balanced perspective on u.s. activities here and overseas.

A friend of mine recently recommended this book to me. I'm a fan of ground level first-hand accounts of war, and this was a uniquely personal look into what Afghanistan was like for a young hard-charging CIA field officer. In contrast to the various high-level academic treatments of intelligence operations in the Middle East, I found this to be a vulnerable and engaging personalized narrative. Mr. Laux transitions from an innocent patriot through exacting field training and ultimately experiences the soul crushing horror of war. It's a story familiar to a lot of military veterans, but the added dynamic of maintaining cover identities - and the toll this took on his psyche - was a sobering albeit much needed addition to the conversation about benefits and costs American global leadership. I found myself wondering how many others who didn't have a cover rollback are suffering in silence somewhere out there in our country. I have read some reviews that were critical of the many redaction that have been reprinted in this book. They certainly interrupt the pace of the book, especially when the action gets juicy. But for me, the CIA was very much a character in the story. The redaction simply felt to me like its shadowy hand print rather than some overt attempt to add drama. It's true that with even a modest understanding of the regional geopolitics a reader can probably infer what is missing from the page. For me it had the effect of coloring the CIA as a silent character within the narrative. I would recommend this to anyone with an interest in the human side of intelligence operations.

America has no shortage of enemies around the world. In order to defeat them, we need to get inside their heads and understand how they operate. However, as Doug Laux details in his riveting memoir, *Left of Boom*, the military and intelligence community bureaucracies often get in the way and thwart these efforts. Our political leaders deserve their share of the blame too. Readers will be encouraged to know that talented and driven individuals like Mr. Laux have signed up to serve their country following the attacks of 9/11 and against all odds have achieved important successes. Mr.

Laux was the first CIA operations officer to truly get inside the Taliban and take down an IED-network that was routinely killing American soldiers. On the heels of his success in Afghanistan, Mr. Laux was tapped to be one of the first CIA officers to make contact with the Syrian rebels in 2012. He details these experiences with great skill and fluency. Left of Boom is fast-paced and full of revealing stories of what life is like inside the CIA. Mr. Laux also demonstrates tremendous courage in detailing some of his own personal struggles that largely resulted from the enormous amount of stress he dealt with in his occupation. Books like Left of Boom don't come around often. For those who like spy thrillers, here is your chance to hear from the real deal -- someone who has been on the frontlines of the war on terror and achieved remarkable success.

Everywhere he went, even as a rank beginner, the author was the smartest, cleverest, toughest, most engaged agent. After three or four years, he claimed to be acting as almost a deputy Secretary of State, meeting with foreign governments, devising policies and advising higher-ups on the U.S. role in Syria. But several times he bragged about being a trained liar. That sure makes me suspicious of much of the boastful account. The detailed cringeworthy accounts of his interactions with girlfriends are painful to read and an irritating distraction from the book's main topic. Nonetheless, Mr. Laux was a CIA officer in Afghanistan. For that, I salute him. Very few people would be willing to serve as he did.

Left of Boom was a highly disappointing read. I agree with other reviewers who say the re-telling of stories by the author felt inauthentic. In particular, it's hard to believe that this author, who had entered Afghanistan in 2010, was the first Pashtu speaker in the country for the agency, as he claims. There were few examples of so-called discoveries by the author that seem really hard to believe, such as our forces never realized until he pointed out that IED material or a weapon could be hidden under a turban. By the time you finish the book, you just get the sense he wanted to air all his dirty laundry about his employer and former girlfriends.

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