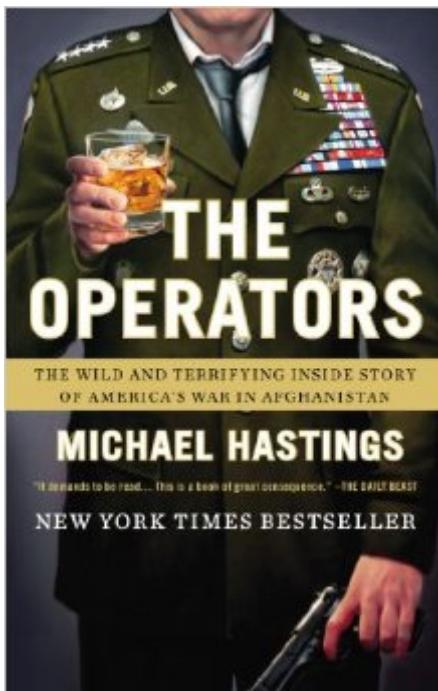


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The Operators: The Wild And Terrifying Inside Story Of America's War In Afghanistan



Synopsis

The inspiration for the upcoming movie War Machine, starring Brad Pitt, Emory Cohen, and Ben Kingsley. From the author of The Last Magazine, a shocking behind-the-scenes portrait of our military commanders, their high-stake maneuvers, and the political firestorm that shook the United States. In the shadow of the hunt for Bin Laden and the United States' involvement in the Middle East, General Stanley McChrystal, the commanding general of international and U.S. forces in Afghanistan, was living large. His loyal staff liked to call him a "rock star." During a spring 2010 trip, journalist Michael Hastings looked on as McChrystal and his staff let off steam, partying and openly bashing the Obama administration. When Hastings' article appeared in Rolling Stone, it set off a political firestorm: McChrystal was unceremoniously fired. In The Operators, Hastings picks up where his Rolling Stone coup ended. From patrol missions in the Afghan hinterlands to senior military advisors' late-night bull sessions to hotel bars where spies and expensive hookers participate in nation-building, Hastings presents a shocking behind-the-scenes portrait of what he fears is an unwinnable war. Written in prose that is at once eye-opening and other times uncannily conversational, readers of No Easy Day will take to Hastings' unyielding first-hand account of the Afghan War and its cast of players.

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Customer Reviews

There are two distinct narratives to this mostly excellent book. In one, Hastings recaps and expands

on his embedded assignment alongside Gen. Stanley McChrystal's team as they traveled Europe and Afghanistan. A variety of inappropriate conversations later reported in Rolling Stone ended up leading to McC's dismissal as Afghanistan war commander. In the second, he presents an after-the-fact roundup of reporting on the Afghanistan situation, and other events in DC. The book will be reviewed by any number of audiences with preconceived opinions. There is a set of people who view what Hastings wrote as an attack on the military, which it isn't. Or, that he betrayed his source's confidence, which he didn't - they had to have known he was recording and writing notes. That's what a reporter does, after all, didn't they know it? Or they thought the same relationship that always works would work again - you hang out, you have some late night conversations, you trade stories and you bond...and when the writing's being done, then the reporter should know what to leave in, what to leave out. It always worked before, so why didn't it work now? I'm sure Duncan Boothby, McC's PAO, wondered that when he was resigning. It didn't work, because Hastings is not Bob Woodward - he's not protecting access by protecting the bridge against enemies from either side. He burned the bridge with everyone, including him, on it. That's what the most honest reporter does - tells the story that he/she sees, and worries about the truth first and last...and relationships nowhere. The reportees aren't called friends, after all - they're called 'sources.' Hastings shows this in a section where he presents a blistering critique of war reporters in general.

You may remember how back in 2010 an article in Rolling Stone got General Stanley McChrystal fired from his job running the war in Afghanistan. McChrystal and his team were presented as arrogant, free-wheeling and insubordinate, bashing the President, as well as the civilian leadership. I remember finding very little surprising about how McChrystal was portrayed in the article -- but I'm a cynic, it's my belief that most people who hold powerful positions tend to be burdened with hubris and incompetence. The fact that this is true, but is rarely reported in the media due to the cozy relationship between the power brokers and the court stenographers, is what really caused the firestorm. It wasn't so much that Hastings' story was true that upset so many in Washington, it was that he had the temerity to put the truth in print. The Operators is a book-length version of the Rolling Stone article, covering the first few years of the Obama administration's efforts in Afghanistan. And those looking for a hero in the story are going to have a hard time finding one. Even Hastings, the narrator and ostensible protagonist, isn't particularly likable. The war Hastings describes is one dominated by political infighting, with various factions hidden away inside their own insulated bubbles, incapable of recognizing the truth, or refusing to admit the truth when it conflicts with ideology. The Obama administration comes off as weak and ineffective, the Afghan government as

corrupt and impossibly incompetent, and the American military as an isolated culture more concerned by its own inner workings and politics than whether or not it can achieve actual "success" in a country as thoroughly broken as Afghanistan (or even what "success" might mean).

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