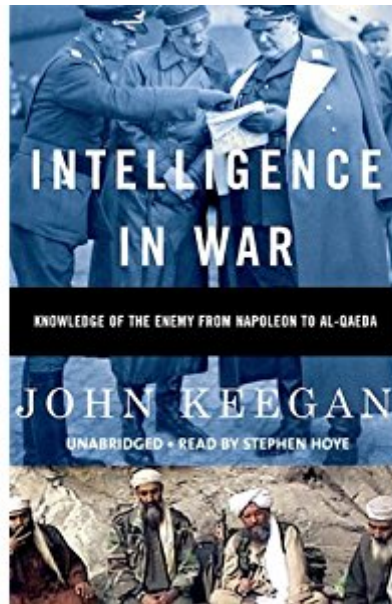# Intelligence In War: Knowledge Of The Enemy From Napoleon To Al-Qaeda

Synopsis

In fiction, the spy is a glamorous figure whose secrets make or break peace, but, historically, has intelligence really been a vital step to military victories? In this breakthrough study, the preeminent war historian John Keegan goes to the heart of a series of important conflicts to develop a powerful argument about military intelligence. In his characteristically wry and perceptive prose, Keegan offers us nothing short of a new history of war through the prism of intelligence.Keegan brings to life the split-second decisions that went into waging war before the benefit of aerial surveillance and electronic communications. The English admiral Horatio Nelson was hot on the heels of Napoleon's fleet in the Mediterranean and never knew it, while Stonewall Jackson was able to compensate for the Confederacy's disadvantage in firearms and manpower with detailed maps of the Appalachians. In the past century, espionage and decryption have changed the face of battle. Timely information, however, is only the beginning of the surprising and disturbing aspects of decisions that are made in war, where brute force is often more critical.Intelligence in War is a thought-provoking work that ranks among John Keegan's finest achievements.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Sir John Keegan, the world's foremost living military historian, has written a book which thoroughly examines the role of intelligence in warfare, reaching a conclusion that is sure to tick off the intelligence community: even the best military intelligence on an enemy's forces and plans is secondary to having adequate military forces and planning with which to defeat the enemy. Keegan gives a number of case studies, including the World War II submarine Battle of the Atlantic,

Stonewall Jackson's 1862 Shenandoah Valley campaign, Admiral Nelson's hunt for the French fleet in the Mediterranean, and the battle of Crete, to show the effect of various degrees of knowledge of the enemy's forces and plans on the outcome of battle. The battle of Crete contributes most to Keegan's conclusion on the usefulness of military intelligence: the commander had a high degree of knowledge of German forces and plans for the batttle, so much so that when the first German paratroopers began to land while he was eating breakfast, he looked up and said: "they're on time." Yet the British lost this battle despite this high degree of foreknowledge of the German invasion plans. Keegan would not deny the importance of military intelligence in future military operations. With the satellite intelligence and codebreaking available today, much can be learned about enemy forces. However despite this foreknowledge, the intention of the potential enemy's command structure can still be unknown: witness the beginning of the first Iraq War, when Iraqi forces were massing on the Kuwait border, yet U.S. intelligence did not believe Saddam would cross the border and invade Kuwait. Technological intelligence capabilities have been overemphasized by the U.S.

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