

88 Days to Kandahar

author: Robert L. Grenier

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Synopsis

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The "first" Afghan War, the CIA's war in response to 9/11, was approved by President Bush and directed by the author, Robert Grenier, the CIA station chief in Islamabad. Forging separate alliances with warlords, Taliban dissidents, and Pakistani intelligence, Grenier defeated the Taliban and put Hamid Karzai in power in 88 days. Later, as head of CIA counterterrorism, he watches as bureaucratic dysfunction in the CIA, Pentagon, and the White House lead to failure in Iraq and Afghanistan.

In his gripping narrative, we meet General Tommy Franks, who bristles at CIA control of "his" war; General "Jafar Amin", a gruff Pakistani intelligence officer who saves Grenier from committing career suicide; Maleeha Lodhi, Pakistan's brilliant ambassador to the US, who tries to warn her government of the al-Qaeda threat; "Mark", the CIA operator who guides GulAgha Shirzai to bloody victory over the Taliban; General Kayani, a cautious man who will become the most powerful man in Pakistan, struggling with Grenier's demands while trying to protect his country; and Hamid Karzai, the puzzling anti-Taliban insurgent, a man of courage, petulance, and vacillating moods.

Grenier's enemies out in front prove only slightly more lethal than the ones behind his own lines. This first war is won despite Washington bureaucrats who divert resources, deny military support, and try to undermine the only Afghan allies capable of winning.

Later, as Grenier directed the CIA's role in the Iraq War, he watched the initial victory squandered. His last command was of CIA's Counterterrorism Center, as Bush-era terrorism policies were being repudiated, as the Taliban reemerged in Afghanistan, and as Pakistan descended into fratricidal violence.

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