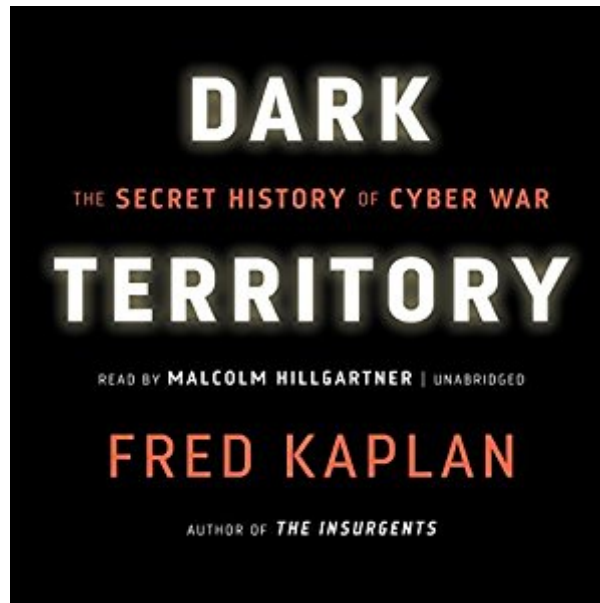




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Dark Territory: The Secret History Of Cyber War



Synopsis

As cyber attacks dominate front-page news, as hackers join the list of global threats, and as top generals warn of a coming cyber war, few books are more timely and enlightening than *Dark Territory: The Secret History of Cyber War* by Slate columnist and Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist Fred Kaplan. Kaplan probes the inner corridors of the National Security Agency, the beyond-top-secret cyber units in the Pentagon, the "information warfare" squads of the military services, and the national security debates in the White House to tell this never-before-told story of the officers, policymakers, scientists, and spies who devised this new form of warfare and who have been planning - and, more often than people know, fighting - these wars for decades. From the 1991 Gulf War to conflicts in Haiti, Serbia, Syria, the former Soviet republics, Iraq, and Iran, where cyber warfare played a significant role, *Dark Territory* chronicles, in fascinating detail, an unknown past that shines an unsettling light on our future.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I spent over two years producing a feature documentary for Alex Gibney called "Zero Days," about the use of cyber means in warfare. The day before our premiere at the Berlin Film Festival, the New York Times reported on one of our findings, the discovery of a classified program at U.S. Cyber Command and NSA, codeword Nitro Zeus, focused on waging a massive cyber war campaign against Iran. I say this simply so I can emphasize the following: I wish that we had had Fred Kaplan's "Dark Territory" when we began work on our film. The use of cyber attack by the military is a topic

cloaked in secrecy, a topic that many at the very highest levels of government remain fearful to speak about even in scant outlines. It was only through years of painstaking journalistic work by a team of investigators that we could piece together the understanding of the cyber world that allowed us to make our film, including the crucial awareness of the deep history that led to operations like Olympic Games and Nitro Zeus. Kaplan has performed a tremendous service by making that history plain to the public here in this book. For those interested in the history of the subject, the books that are worth reading are few. Jay Healey's "A Fierce Domain" and Shane Harris's "@War" are excellent complements to Kaplan. I expect Thomas Rid's upcoming book will join that list. But start with Kaplan. He has details you won't find elsewhere, and tells the story with characteristic skill. Knowing how heavy that cloak of secrecy weighs on the people who have worked behind it, I am impressed by what Kaplan has achieved here, and I highly recommend the book.

After recently reading Robert Gates: Passion for Leadership book, I was enthralled with this Fred Kaplan tome, "Dark Territory", especially since Robert Gates (Former Defense Secretary and Director of the CIA) referred to the online cyber world as the Dark Territory. Its aptly named and has long been a personal belief of mine since before the world wide web existed, when the internet was a vast majority of random servers and bulletin board systems. Even at that point, it was filled to the brim with persons and groups of individuals hacking and forging their way through the original emptiness of what we have come to know as today's internet. Since the dawn of that existence, both sides have been at war, a cyberwar between good and evil, dark and light, knowledge and secrecy. It has always been an avid interest of mine to go deeper into this realm and now Kaplan, a Pulitzer prize winning author brings us into the climax of it. I say highlights because Kaplan starts off by bringing us into how President Reagan initially jumped on board while viewing the movie War Games with Matthew Broderick and wondering if this could actually happen and the answer was a resounding "yes." I say highlights because Kaplan traverses this ground and jumps throughout the internet's history recalling many stories, interviews with anonymous hackers and although he has a great depth to his reporting, in my view, he is just scratching the surface in relation to many issues and histories of the battleground that is cyberspace. For those that are unfamiliar with a lot of the history, events and inner workings of what takes place, he does a fantastic job, spotlighting some pivotal moments to help these readers be aware of what goes on in "Dark Territory". Since before the world web existed, our government has largely tapped into a venerable resource for both offensive attacks

and defensive efforts to protect our national security. Even though the internet has opened a global stage for other countries trying to accomplish the same goals, it is an extensively daunting battle uphill. This totality of cyber wars has outrun our conventional wars and will continue to be on the upstroke. Even so, Kaplan kept me interested with tidbits of information from Reagan and "War Games" to "Sneakers" and the NSA, showing the screenwriters for both and how they were intimately tied in with the RAND corporation and how they took cues from one of the original programmers for the North American Aerospace Defense Command computer, and never knew that he was also on an advisory board to the National Security Agency. These tidbits, highlights and coincidences form a lot of the interweaving of the book, even though Kaplan jumps back and forth through different eras to show us this. He touches on various Presidents and how they viewed cybersecurity and their reasoning for and/or against, throughout history. He brings us on varying accounts of how our government averts disaster, as well as how they have mounted attacks. He talks about Edward Snowden and President Obama's reactions to the same. Corporate securities, attacks on various corporations (eBay, Sony, Target and many others), banks and generally anything in between. He brings to light, the theme of protecting our nation while balancing our civil liberties, as we are currently seeing now with the Apple quagmire of recent weeks. The book is filled with complexities and is well told and researched by Kaplan. I believe as I said before, that this just brings to light, a surface view of what is really transpiring daily, on the world wide web. There are so many factors to counter in, with cyber attacks and cyber sabotage, both inward and outward, in between corporations, individuals and government. There is the "Deep Web" running its underground drug trade, credit card fraud trades, human trafficking and much more throughout the world on anonymous TOR servers. The new currency of the criminal world, as Bitcoin has shown us and since most of the credit card fraud trade is Russian and Chinese based, it effectually is bringing about a new world war throughout cyberspace that we have to consistently be aware of, reminiscent of our intelligence operations in the Cold War. There are simply too many factors to this "Dark Territory" to cover effectively in one book, but I really enjoyed that Kaplan has directed our attention to a taste of it for us. Especially for those reading the book, that do not have this knowledge beforehand, it is an eye opening tour for most readers.

I did an online search of the words "Hackers" today and the top results were news stories about (yet another) bank being hacked - perhaps by a

group closely associated with North Korea and stolen passwords from social media sites offered for sale or being released online. I typically see several headlines like this during any given week, and the frequency of hacking reports has only increased over the past few years. So, when I saw *Dark Territory: The Secret History of Cyber War* by Fred Kaplan (@fmkaplan) I decided to take a look to increase my limited knowledge on this subject. I found the book to be an excellent primer on the subject, and very readable. Anyone concerned about getting lost in highly technical details need not worry: this is history, not how-to. *Dark Territory* begins with a wonderfully apt anecdote about President Ronald Reagan taking in the movie *WarGames* in 1983 (full disclosure: it's one of my favorite movies of that time period) before backtracking to address two landmark events: the creation of the computer network in 1967 and the founding of the National Security Agency in 1952. From there the book follows a fairly linear course through key events in the years since 1990, beginning with the first Iraq War. I was aware of some of the incidents described but learned about a lot more. For me the only frustrating passages were the ones describing yet another US government committee or working group formed to review the threat of cyber attacks and provide recommendations. Yes, I know that's how our bureaucracy works, but still. One point that I appreciated Mr. Kaplan making more than once was the recognition by key figures that whatever actions our government takes in the realm of cyber warfare are also actions that can be taken against us: there is an extremely fine line between offense and defense in the cyber domain. As our world becomes increasingly more connected and controlled by machines, cyber security is a subject we're all going to need to be smarter about. *Dark Territory* is a great introduction for those wanting to get started.

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