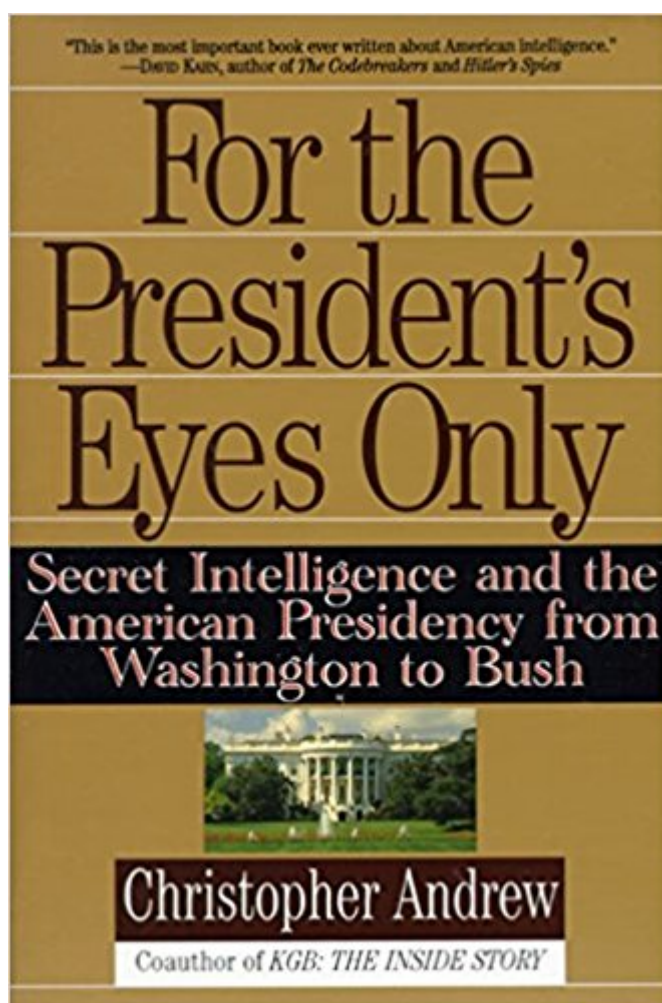


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For The President's Eyes Only: Secret Intelligence And The American Presidency From Washington To Bush



Synopsis

From the co-author of KGB: The Inside Story and an acknowledged authority on the subject comes "the most important book ever written about American intelligence."--David Kahn, author of The Codebreakers and Hitler's Spies

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Customer Reviews

In this impressive survey, British historian Andrew (Her Majesty's Secret Service) assesses the extent to which U.S. secret intelligence has been influenced by the personalities and policies of our presidents. Although George Washington and Woodrow Wilson made good use of secret intelligence, the author shows there was no official American intelligence community until WWII, when Franklin D. Roosevelt relied more attentively on intelligence collection and analysis than any previous president. But, Andrew notes, only Dwight Eisenhower, John F. Kennedy and George Bush showed a flair for using intelligence. Eisenhower's wartime command experience exploiting covert resources served him well when he became chief executive; JFK presided over the most spectacular intelligence success of the Cold War, the Cuban missile crisis (the author, however, faults Kennedy for poor judgment in the Bay of Pigs invasion). As for George Bush, the first former CIA director elected to the White House, Andrew demonstrates that he had a better grasp of intelligence capabilities than any of his predecessors. Andrew's interpretations are often striking: "The most powerful government ever to fall as a result of covert action was the administration of Richard Nixon." Photos. Copyright 1994 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out

of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Much of the value returned on America's multibillion-dollar spending on intelligence depends on what the ultimate consumer, the president, does with it. Too often the sum is wasted if he ignores it or wants fortune-telling clairvoyance from it. But a few presidents have justified the expense with their realistic use of confidential information. Writing about each chief executive, Andrew blends the organizational growth of U.S. spy agencies (mostly ad hoc entities until the cold war spawned the CIA and NSA) with presidential predilections of the moment. FDR preferred espionage gathering on people (he was indifferent, unlike Churchill, to the signals intelligence that was possibly decisive in World War II); aerial surveillance tripped up Ike in the U-2 affair; and Nixon's undoing was his penchant for snooping on domestic political opponents. When not telling a revealing anecdote, such as Wilson's naive use of a simple cipher the British had no trouble cracking, Andrew aims his fluid analysis at the intelligence successes and failures in the foreign policy realm--in all, a fascinating synthesis from a premier author of a half-dozen previous espionage histories. An excellent companion acquisition is G. J. O'Toole's *Honorable Treachery* (1991), a history of U.S. intelligence operations. Gilbert Taylor --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

This work is clearly a five star account of the manner in which our past presidents valued and used intelligence and counter-intelligence operations to further U.S. interests at home and abroad. Most interesting to me was the fact that so few presidents up to Franklin Roosevelt and World War II used any intelligence organizations or operations at all. Only a handful of presidents engaged the use of an intelligence service during their administrations, and then only during a time of war. While stories about our earlier presidents are somewhat limited, they were still of great interest. The latter day presidents are explained in detail in an easy to read and hard to put down fashion. Great read for history and spy buffs!

This book is extremely well written and very informative. I picked it up as a reference for a term paper, and initially I read just the section pertaining to the term paper. Whenever I opened it to read a passage for the term paper though, I found that I just couldn't put the book down because it was so interesting. While on Christmas vacation, I went back and read the rest of the book. I rank this book right up there with Clay Blair's "Silent Victory," and I highly recommend it for anyone interested in learning more about the development of the American intelligence community at the highest levels of government.

This is an altogether fascinating book on how American Presidents have used, misused, or ignored secret intelligence in the 20th Century. Although Andrew provides a brief introductory chapter on how U.S. presidents from Washington onward have used secret intelligence, the bulk of the book concerns 20th Century presidents from Woodrow Wilson to George W Bush (senior). From the beginning of the Cold War (1947-1992) CIA was the principal means by which successive presidents received secret intelligence. Therefore much of this book chronicles the dynamic relationships that developed between CIA directors and their most important individual customer, the President. As this book makes clear, not all presidents understood the value and uses of the secret intelligence provided through CIA. Also the role of CIA as a purveyor of intelligence was muddled by its ability to conduct covert operations. More than one president was far more interested in the ability of CIA to engage in secret operations to achieve presidential national security objectives than the intelligence that it provided. According to Andrew, excluding John Kennedy, only two modern Presidents really understood the value, use, and limitations of intelligence. President Dwight Eisenhower, thanks to his WWII role as Supreme Allied Commander, came to the presidency with a clear understanding and appreciation of intelligence and established a good working relationship with CIA and the IC. President George W. Bush (Senior) actually served a year as CIA Director under Gerald Ford. This experience gave him an unprecedented understanding (for a U.S. President) of intelligence processes and capabilities as well as a clear understanding of the uses and abuses of covert action. Bush was a very well liked CIA and more importantly trusted. As a result, even if Bush disliked the then CIA Director William Webster, he had a fine sense of the importance of the intelligence that CIA produced. He even added Robert Gates, a career CIA officer, to his National Security Council (NSC). Almost unique among U.S. Presidents, Bush understood the vital differences between predictive and warning intelligence and never expected CIA to produce prophetic warnings on specific events. In sum this is a well written and well researched book that shows yet again that any intelligence is only as good as the system or, in this case, individual it serves.

In this book Andrew takes on the Herculean task of describing the relationship of American presidents with the intelligence community. Two messages that came through to me from the book are (1) Most presidents don't know how to handle intelligence; and, (2) intelligence is such an elusive, cloudy essence that it's a wonder it succeeds as often as it does. In Andrew's mind there were only four U.S. presidents who adeptly used and understood the value of intelligence --

Washington, Kennedy (briefly), Eisenhower and the first George Bush. Others either ignored it, abused it, misunderstood it, damaged it, or otherwise failed to take advantage of this double-edged sword called intelligence. Andrew dwells necessarily on the role of the intelligence function during the 20th century, combining a very readable style with encyclopedic knowledge of his subject. He goes into great detail about many historic events where intelligence played an important role. This is a detailed primer on U.S. strategic intelligence. Unfortunately, having been written in 1995, the book only goes up to the end of the first Bush administration and, therefore, completely misses out on such current threats as jihadism, nuclear proliferation, the internet and other electronic breakthroughs. On the other hand, in discussing intelligence intended "for the president's eyes only", Andrew also gives us a much broader backstage view of the behavior of our presidents during times of crisis. This incredibly well-researched and annotated book is a must-read for anyone interested in presidential history and intelligence, be they scholars or laymen. Andrew has given us a formidable and eminently readable piece of work.

Interesting stories of challenges to each president. The story I was looking for however, was not included.

this was the text book I used for a class that I taught. It is an excellent book.

Well written. Not as enlightening as expected.

This was a really quick read and very fun. For those interested in history, it offers insights into the factors leaders had while making decisions that few of us common people would have known about.

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