

BLINKING RED

CRISIS AND COMPROMISE IN AMERICAN INTELLIGENCE AFTER 9/11

MICHAEL ALLEN

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A former senior White House and congressional official's gripping account of the remaking of America's national security structure, a case study in power politics and institutional reform.

A SENIOR WHITE HOUSE AND CONGRESSIONAL OFFICIAL'S GRIPPING ACCOUNT OF THE COMPLETE REVAMPING OF AMERICA'S NATIONAL SECURITY STRUCTURE IS A CASE STUDY IN POWER POLITICS AND INSTITUTIONAL REFORM.

The most momentous overhaul to America's national security infrastructure since World War II unfolded amid scathing public criticism and heated political debate in the months leading up to the 2004 elections.

"Blinking Red" takes you behind the scenes of the dramatic restructuring of America's Intelligence Community in the years following the attacks of 9/11, culminating in the creation of the Director of National Intelligence, or "DNI" in Washington parlance. This new office would oversee the country's vast intelligence apparatus spread across seventeen different government agencies, supplanting the all-powerful CIA Director as the nation's top spymaster.

The far reaching authority vested in the Office of the DNI was ambiguous, and tested the traditional tensions between America's elite intelligence organizations. "Blinking Red" takes you inside the internecine battles and trench warfare behind this dramatic shift in how America gathers and uses intelligence to protect it from further large scale attacks against its citizens.

This revamping of America's intelligence operations came against the backdrop of "massive intelligence failures" that missed multiple warnings of 9/11, as well as the incorrect conclusion that Iraq possessed weapons of mass destruction, an assessment that led America into a war that would last nearly a decade and cost thousands of American lives.

Both failures, coupled with the nation's overall sense of insecurity in the wake of 9/11, catapulted intelligence to the forefront of the national debate on how to keep America safe. Emboldened by the 9/11 Commission's Report, the public and the Congress called for the transformation of an outdated system designed to fight the Cold War into an agile enterprise prepared to take on the new asymmetric threats faced by the United States.

The debate that ensued in the shadow of the looming Presidential election pitted those in the Democratically-controlled Congress who embraced reform against the CIA, the Pentagon, and Republicans – and ultimately Republicans against themselves.

Don Rumsfeld, the acerbic Secretary of Defense urged caution on the President. Worried that the 9/11 Commission's reforms would leave the Pentagon out of the intelligence loop, Rumsfeld wrote the President, "Members of Congress, the press, and [John] Kerry can say what they want and afford to be wrong, and there is no penalty. The President of the United States has to be right on something of this importance." Rumsfeld lamented "amateur brain surgeons" in Congress and echoed Vice President Cheney's concern that – "We are in the middle of a war that is complicated and different and we're rearranging the deck chairs of the Titanic."

Ultimately though, the pressure and momentum for change was too great, and after a protracted and fierce legislative battle, the DNI was given a seat at the nation's most powerful table.

With "Blinking Red," author Michael Allen brings the reader inside the inner sanctums of America's national security power structure, and introduces the dedicated yet complicated and often combative cast of characters tasked to keep America safe from another 9/11.

The book - based on interviews with President Bush, Vice President Cheney, former directors of the CIA, Congressional leadership, and other senior government officials, coupled with thorough academic research conducted by someone who witnessed the changes firsthand - is a study of the complex and opaque machinations of the American political system that produced these dramatic changes to our nation's security policies.

"Blinking Red" explores the legislative dealing and political wrangling behind the reform and helps the reader fully appreciate why this is an experiment where its effectiveness remain in question.

Experts are already calling the book the, "definitive historical account of intelligence reform after September 11," and "suspenseful and stunning... a master narrative."