



Against All Enemies: Inside America's War on Terror

By Richard A. Clarke

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"The [Bush] administration has squandered the opportunity to eliminate al Qaeda....A new al Qaeda has emerged and is growing stronger, in part because of our own actions and inactions. It is in many ways a tougher opponent than the original threat we faced before September 11, and we are not doing what is necessary to make America safe from that threat."

No one has more authority to make that claim than Richard Clarke, the former counterterrorism czar for both Bill Clinton and George W. Bush. The one person who knows more about Usama bin Laden and al Qaeda than anyone else in this country, he has devoted two decades of his professional life to combating terrorism. Richard Clarke served seven presidents and worked inside the White House for George H.W. Bush, Bill Clinton, and George W. Bush until he resigned in March 2003. He knows, better than anyone, the hidden successes and failures of the Clinton years. He knows, better than anyone, why we failed to prevent 9/11. He knows, better than anyone, how President Bush reacted to the attack and what happened behind the scenes in the days that followed. He knows whether or not Iraq presented a terrorist threat to the United States and whether there were hidden costs to the invasion of that country.

Most disturbing of all are Clarke's revelations about the Bush administration's lack of interest in al Qaeda prior to September 11. From the moment the Bush team took office and decided to retain Clarke in his post as the counterterrorism czar, Clarke tried to persuade them to take al Qaeda as seriously as had Bill Clinton. For months, he was denied the opportunity even to make his case to Bush. He encountered key officials who gave the impression that they had never heard of al Qaeda; who focused incessantly on Iraq; who even advocated long-discredited conspiracy theories about Saddam's involvement in previous attacks on the United States.

Clarke was the nation's crisis manager on 9/11, running the Situation Room -- a scene described here for the first time -- and then watched in dismay at what followed. After ignoring existing plans to attack al Qaeda when he first took office, George Bush made disastrous decisions when he finally did pay attention. Coming from a man known as one of the hard-liners against terrorists, *Against All Enemies* is both a powerful history of our two-decades-long confrontation with terrorism and a searing indictment of the current administration.

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

Few political memoirs have made such a dramatic entrance as that by Richard A. Clarke. During the week of the initial publication of *Against All Enemies*, Clarke was featured on *60 Minutes*, testified before the 9/11 commission, and touched off a raging controversy over how the presidential administration handled the threat of terrorism and the post-9/11 geopolitical landscape. Clarke, a veteran Washington insider who had advised presidents Reagan, George H.W. Bush, Clinton, and George W. Bush, dissects each man's approach to terrorism but levels the harshest criticism at the latter Bush and his advisors who, Clarke asserts, failed to take terrorism and Al-Qaeda seriously. Clarke details how, in light of mounting intelligence of the danger Al-Qaeda presented, his urgent requests to move terrorism up the list of priorities in the early days of the administration were met with apathy and procrastination and how, after the attacks took place, Bush and key figures such as Donald Rumsfeld, Paul Wolfowitz, and Dick Cheney turned their attention almost immediately to Iraq, a nation not involved in the attacks. *Against All Enemies* takes the reader inside the Beltway beginning with the Reagan administration, who failed to retaliate against the 1982 Beirut bombings, fueling the perception around the world that the United States was vulnerable to such attacks. Terrorism becomes a growing but largely ignored threat under the first President Bush, whom Clarke cites for his failure to eliminate Saddam Hussein, thereby necessitating a continued American presence in Saudi Arabia that further inflamed anti-American sentiment. Clinton, according to Clarke, understood the gravity of the situation and became increasingly obsessed with stopping Al-Qaeda. He had developed workable plans but was hamstrung by political infighting and the sex scandal that led to his impeachment. But Bush and his advisers, Clarke says, didn't get it before 9/11 and they didn't get it after, taking a unilateral approach that seemed destined to lead to more attacks on Americans and American interests around the world. Clarke's inside accounts of what happens in the corridors of power are fascinating and the book, written in a compelling, highly readable style, at times almost seems like a fiction thriller. But the threat of terrorism and the consequences of Bush's approach to it feel very sobering and very real. --John Moe

From Publishers Weekly

From the first thrilling chapter, which takes readers into the White House center of operations on September 11, through his final negative assessment of George W. Bush's post-9/11 war on terror, Clarke, the U.S.'s former terrorism czar, offers a complex and illuminating look into the successes and failures of the nation's security apparatus. He offers charged (and, one must note, for himself triumphant) insider scenes, such as when he scared the devil out of Clinton's Cabinet to motivate them to fight terrorism. The media has understandably focused on Clarke's charge that Bush neglected terrorism before the attacks on New York and Washington; but Clarke also offers a longer perspective on the issue, going back to the first Gulf War (when he was an assistant secretary of state) and makes some stunning revelations. One of the latter is that the U.S. came close to war with Iran over that country's role in the terrorist bombing of the Khobar Towers in Saudi Arabia in 1996. An important aspect of Clarke's book is that it is only one man's account—and an account moreover that casts its author as hero and others (FBI, CIA, the military) as screw-ups; as has been seen in recent congressional hearings, administration officials (notably, Condoleezza Rice) have challenged its veracity. But those inclined to believe Clarke will find that he makes a devastating case about the Bush administration's failure from the beginning (when Clarke's position was downgraded and he was taken off the top-level Principals Committee) to make terrorism as high a priority as Clinton's did. In the face of the Bush team's claim that they didn't know about a threat to the homeland, readers will be haunted by two small words: after mobilizing to confront the Millennium terror threat, Clarke reached what seemed to him the obvious conclusion regarding al-Qaeda: "They're here."

Review

The New York Times Book Review Against All Enemies is too good to be ignored...It is a rarity among Washington-insider memoirs -- it's a thumping good read.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Nathan Marker:

Do you have favorite book? Should you have, what is your favorite's book? Book is very important thing for us to know everything in the world. Each publication has different aim or maybe goal; it means that reserve has different type. Some people feel enjoy to spend their time for you to read a book. They are really reading whatever they get because their hobby is actually reading a book. Consider the person who don't like looking at a book? Sometime, individual feel need book if they found difficult problem as well as exercise. Well, probably you will need this Against All Enemies: Inside America's War on Terror.

Jolie Browne:

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