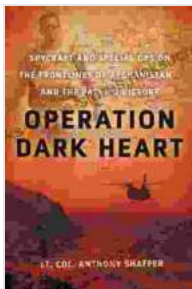


# Spycraft and Special Ops on the Frontlines of Afghanistan and the Path to America's Longest War

The war in Afghanistan, the United States' longest and most costly conflict, was a complex and often misunderstood affair. While headlines often focused on the larger military campaigns and political developments, a covert war was also being waged in the shadows, one that played a significant role in shaping the course of the conflict. This was the world of spycraft and special operations, a realm of clandestine operations, targeted killings, and high-stakes missions carried out by elite units like the CIA's Special Activities Division (SAD) and the Pentagon's Joint Special Operations Command (JSOC).



## Operation Dark Heart: Spycraft and Special Ops on the Frontlines of Afghanistan -- and The Path to Victory

by Anthony Shaffer

★★★★☆ 4 out of 5

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Print length : 319 pages



Drawing on firsthand accounts from participants, declassified documents, and extensive research, this article explores the secretive world of spycraft

and special operations in Afghanistan, revealing the complexities, challenges, and impact of these covert actions on the course of America's longest war.

### **Spycraft: The CIA's Covert War in Afghanistan**

In the wake of the 9/11 attacks, the CIA quickly deployed to Afghanistan, tasked with gathering intelligence on Al Qaeda and its Taliban allies. The agency's operatives worked closely with Afghan warlords and tribal leaders, providing them with money, weapons, and training in exchange for information and support.

As the war progressed, the CIA's role in Afghanistan expanded. The agency established a network of secret prisons, where suspected terrorists were held and interrogated. It also launched a controversial drone strike program, which targeted suspected militants with little regard for civilian casualties.

The CIA's covert operations in Afghanistan were often effective in achieving their immediate objectives. They helped to dismantle Al Qaeda's network, capture or kill key Taliban leaders, and disrupt insurgent operations. However, these operations also came at a cost. The drone strike program, in particular, generated significant backlash from Afghans and international observers, who argued that it was counterproductive and caused more harm than good.

### **Special Ops: JSOC's Night Raids and Targeted Killings**

In addition to the CIA's covert operations, the Pentagon also deployed a range of special operations forces to Afghanistan. These units, which included Delta Force, SEAL Team 6, and the Green Berets, conducted

high-stakes missions such as night raids, targeted killings, and hostage rescues.

Special operations forces played a critical role in the early years of the war, helping to topple the Taliban regime and capture or kill key Al Qaeda leaders. However, as the war dragged on, their role became more controversial. Night raids, in particular, were criticized for causing civilian casualties and alienating the Afghan population.

Targeted killings also proved to be a contentious issue. While the Pentagon argued that these strikes were necessary to take out high-value targets, critics argued that they were often based on faulty intelligence and resulted in the deaths of innocent civilians.

### **The Path to America's Longest War**

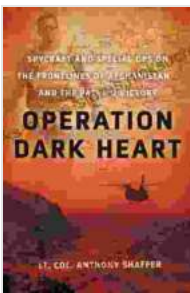
The covert war in Afghanistan played a significant role in shaping the course of America's longest war. The CIA's operations helped to topple the Taliban regime and capture or kill key Al Qaeda leaders. However, the agency's use of secret prisons and drone strikes also generated significant backlash and contributed to the growing anti-American sentiment in Afghanistan.

Special operations forces also played a critical role in the early years of the war. However, as the war dragged on, their role became more controversial. Night raids and targeted killings were criticized for causing civilian casualties and alienating the Afghan population.

Ultimately, the covert war in Afghanistan was a complex and often contradictory affair. It achieved some successes, but it also contributed to

the growing instability and anti-American sentiment that plagued the country for years to come.

The war in Afghanistan was a long and costly affair, one that left a lasting impact on the country and the world. The covert war played a significant role in shaping the course of the conflict, both positive and negative. It is a story that is still being written, and one that will continue to be debated for years to come.



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