



The President's Book of Secrets: The Untold Story of Intelligence Briefings to America's Presidents

By David Priess

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The President's Book of Secrets: The Untold Story of Intelligence Briefings to America's Presidents By David Priess

Every president has had a unique and complicated relationship with the intelligence community. While some have been coolly distant, even adversarial, others have found their intelligence agencies to be among the most valuable instruments of policy and power.

Since John F. Kennedy's presidency, this relationship has been distilled into a personalized daily report: a short summary of what the intelligence apparatus considers the most crucial information for the president to know that day about global threats and opportunities. This top-secret document is known as the President's Daily Brief, or, within national security circles, simply “the Book.” Presidents have spent anywhere from a few moments (Richard Nixon) to a healthy part of their day (George W. Bush) consumed by its contents; some (Bill Clinton and George H. W. Bush) consider it far and away the most important document they saw on a regular basis while commander in chief.

The details of most PDBs are highly classified, and will remain so for many years. But the process by which the intelligence community develops and presents the Book is a fascinating look into the operation of power at the highest levels. David Priess, a former intelligence officer and daily briefer, has interviewed every living president and vice president as well as more than one hundred others intimately involved with the production and delivery of the president's book of secrets. He offers an unprecedented window into the decision making of every president from Kennedy to Obama, with many character-rich stories revealed here for the first time.

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Editorial Review

Review

“An authoritative yet easily read book about an important part of the president's daily routine. [Priess] has successfully enlivened the work with myriad first-person accounts from former presidents down to the folks who have written the PDB articles. A CIA review of the manuscript ensured that classified material was not included, but Priess gives the reader plenty of substance to go with details of the process. As a result, The President's Book of Secrets offers a previously untold story about one of those closely guarded, ‘eyes-only’ facets of the intelligence world.” *Michael K. Bohn, Tribune News Service*

“In The President's Book of Secrets, David Priess succeeds in lifting up the curtain on the personalities behind national security and how the government's leading analysts bend to those characters to fulfill their duty.” —*Charged Affairs*

“A fascinating look at a daily ritual that has been mostly shrouded in secrecy since its inception... Priess illustrates a compelling portrait of the many interesting stories surrounding the production of the daily brief and the subsequent reactions of its recipients.” —*Deseret News*

“[Priess] deftly sketches the evolution of this daily intelligence digest, along with the twists and turns of policy, personalities and power plays... Anyone interested in how decisions get made by the most powerful person in the most powerful country in the world will relish the details in *The President's Book of Secrets*.” —*Wall Street Journal*

“David Priess, a CIA officer who served as a daily intelligence briefer during the Clinton and George W. Bush administrations, has written a thoroughly engaging account of how ‘The Book,’ as it is known in Agency parlance, came into existence, and how presidents used (or ignored) it.” —*The Washington Times*

“David Priess, a former CIA officer, has lifted the veil on the process and substance of creating the PDB in his readable and well-researched volume, *The President's Book of Secrets*... providing insights not only into modern American presidents and their approaches to working with intelligence products but also the attitudes of senior officials to the products. Those insights are an interesting addition to the historical record on U.S. foreign policy.” —Jack Caravelli, *The Washington Free Beacon*

“An important addition to the body of academic works on national security. It offers a unique look into the people and processes that impacted and continue to shape the course of history. In lifting the veil, Priess gives readers not just a close look at a key product that influences the choices of those in the White House, but the inner workings of government itself.” —*Proceedings*

About the Author

Dr. David Priess served during the Bill Clinton and George W. Bush administrations as an award-winning intelligence officer, manager, and daily intelligence briefer at the CIA, as well as a desk officer at the State Department. He obtained his PhD in political science from Duke University and has published articles in journals such as *Security Studies*, *Middle East Policy*, and the *Mershon International Studies Review*, as well as book reviews and eclectic articles in outlets ranging from *Foreword* to *Skeptic*. Priess is currently director

of analytic services for Analytic Advantage, Inc., offering specialized training, mentoring, and consulting services to the intelligence community, other government offices, and the private sector.

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Johnny Rogowski:

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