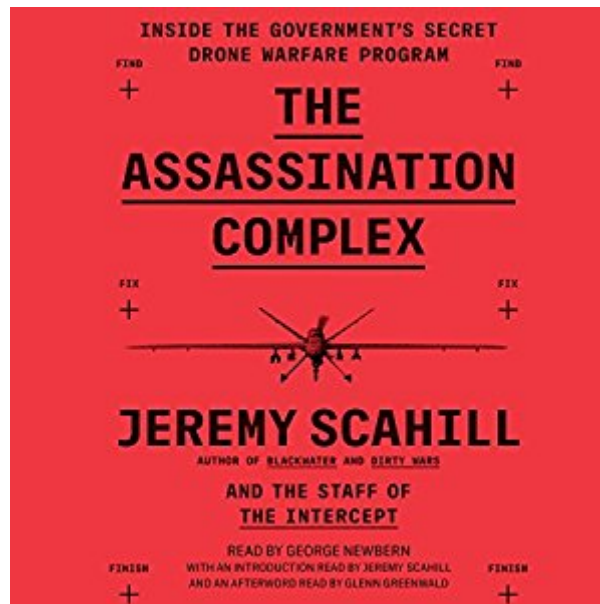


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The Assassination Complex: Inside The Government's Secret Drone Warfare Program



Synopsis

Major revelations about the US government's drone program - best-selling author Jeremy Scahill and his colleagues at the investigative website The Intercept expose stunning new details about America's secret assassination policy. When the US government discusses drone strikes publicly, it offers assurances that such operations are a more precise alternative to troops on the ground and are authorized only when an "imminent" threat is present and there is "near certainty" that the intended target will be killed. The implicit message on drone strikes from the Obama administration has been trust, but don't verify. The online magazine The Intercept exploded this secrecy when it obtained a cache of secret slides that provide a window into the inner workings of the US military's kill/capture operations in Afghanistan, Yemen, and Somalia. Whether through the use of drones, night raids, or new platforms yet to be employed, these documents show assassination to be central to US counterterrorism policy. The classified documents reveal that Washington's 14-year targeted killing campaign suffers from an overreliance on flawed signals intelligence, an apparently incalculable civilian toll, and an inability to extract potentially valuable intelligence from terror suspects. This campaign, carried out by two presidents through four presidential terms, has been deliberately obscured from the public and insulated from democratic debate. The Assassination Complex allows us to understand at last the circumstances under which the US government grants itself the right to sentence individuals to death without the established checks and balances of arrest, trial, and appeal. The book includes original contributions from Glenn Greenwald and Edward Snowden.

Book Information

Audible Audio Edition

Listening Length: 5 hours and 13 minutes

Program Type: Audiobook

Version: Unabridged

Publisher: Simon & Schuster Audio

Audible.com Release Date: May 3, 2016

Whispersync for Voice: Ready

Language: English

ASIN: B01EVGE8ZQ

Best Sellers Rank: #29 in Books > History > Military > Weapons & Warfare > Conventional #72 in Books > Audible Audiobooks > Politics & Current Events > Freedom & Security #84 in Books

Customer Reviews

In 2001 there were 16 names on the Known or Suspected Terrorist list. In 2013 there were 469,000 and there are now north of 680,000. These are people singled out for extra security at airports, like Senator Ted Kennedy who was prevented from boarding several flights, and a cub scout named Mikey Hicks, who got the treatment the first time when he was just two. It also includes the president of Bolivia and the Speaker of the Lebanese Parliament. Membership in a terrorist organization is not required. Once on the list, directives request every conceivable scrap of information, even biographical data on co-travelers. Mere death is not an acceptable reason for removal from the list, and neither is acquittal by a jury. To get off a list, all 19 American security agencies have to agree, and the subject will not be informed. And that's just one list. So begins *The Assassination Complex*. The book is really well constructed. Its prologue is a view from above by Edward Snowden, who compares the treatment he received with the slap on the wrists to General Petraeus for basically the same thing, the first foretaste of the tsunami of hypocrisy to come. The first stories butter us up with the way civilians are targeted by agencies like TSA, and all the astounding kinds of data they collect on over a million people, most of whom are specifically not even suspected of belonging to terrorist organizations. Then we get into drone killing. In story after story, the methods, the operations and the effects on individuals, families and whole countries comes into stark relief. Extrajudicial killing is a routine daily practice, with hundreds of civilians killed for every suspect targeted. This includes children, pregnant women, American hostages and whole families.

Based on dramatic revelations from a post-Snowden whistleblower, this excellent short book from Jeremy Scahill and other Intercept writers provides a long-overdue window into America's vast killing machine: who makes the decisions on who will be killed; how those decisions are made; how the strikes are carried out; most of all, in a thoughtful foreword by Edward Snowden and afterword by Glenn Greenwald, the implications for a democratic society of all this due-process-free, non-battlefield killing. In addition to its substantive appeal, the book is beautifully laid out and includes numerous graphs, photographs, and text inserts that render some of the more complex aspects of the topic (such as the communications infrastructure and other logistics of drone strikes) easy to follow. The inserts on the Orwellian language of drone strikes were particularly good. Did you know the military laments the difficulty of killing far-away people as "the tyranny of distance"? It takes a special sensibility to refer to obstacles to killing people as a form of "tyranny," but those are

your tax dollars at work. Also, when an intended target is killed, that's called a "jackpot," but when an unintended target is killed, that's called an "EKIA," or Enemy Killed in Action. So no matter who is killed, the government always wins. It's both amusing and dispiriting to consider that the people behind this "heads I win, tails you lose" nomenclature also probably roll their eyes at the notion of children getting a "participant" ribbon just for entering a competition, with no need to actually win anything. I'm a little surprised the book has only received four reviews since coming out ten days ago.

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