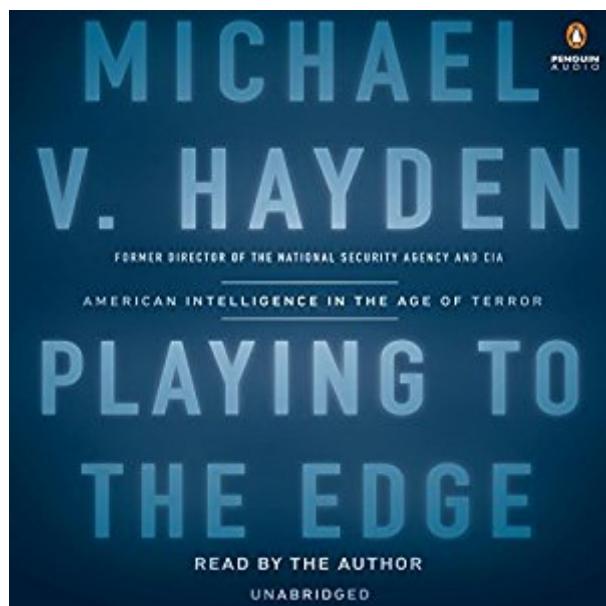


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# Playing To The Edge: American Intelligence In The Age Of Terror



## Synopsis

An unprecedented high-level master narrative of America's intelligence wars from the only person ever to helm both the CIA and NSA, at a time of heinous new threats and wrenching change. For General Michael Hayden, playing to the edge means playing so close to the line that you get chalk dust on your cleats. Otherwise, by playing back, you may protect yourself, but you will be less successful in protecting America. "Play to the edge" was Hayden's guiding principle when he ran the National Security Agency, and it remained so when he ran the CIA. In his view, many shortsighted and uninformed people are quick to criticize, and this book will give them much to chew on but little easy comfort; it is an unapologetic insider's look told from the perspective of the people who faced awesome responsibilities head on, in the moment. How did American intelligence respond to terrorism, a major war, and the most sweeping technological revolution in the last 500 years? What was the NSA before 9/11, and how did it change in its aftermath? Why did the NSA begin the controversial terrorist surveillance program that included the acquisition of domestic phone records? What else was set in motion during this period that formed the backdrop for the infamous Snowden revelations in 2013? As director of the CIA in the last three years of the Bush administration, Hayden had to deal with the rendition, detention, and interrogation program as bequeathed to him by his predecessors. He also had to ramp up the agency to support its role in the targeted killing program that began to dramatically increase in July 2008. This was a time of great crisis at the CIA, and some agency veterans have credited Hayden with actually saving the agency. He himself won't go that far, but he freely acknowledges that the CIA helped turn the American security establishment into the most effective killing machine in the history of armed conflict. For 10 years, then, General Michael Hayden was a participant in some of the most telling events in the annals of American national security. General Hayden's goals in writing this book are simple and unwavering: no apologies. No excuses. Just what happened. And why. As he writes, "There is a story here that deserves to be told, without varnish and without spin. My view is my view, and others will certainly have different perspectives, but this view deserves to be told to create as complete a history as possible of these turbulent times. I bear no grudges, or at least not many, but I do want this to be a straightforward and readable history for that slice of the American population who depend on and appreciate intelligence but who do not have the time to master its many obscure characteristics."

## Book Information

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## **Customer Reviews**

Filled with interesting nuggets, and factoids, some disguised but very thinly, for those who follow international affairs and intelligence matters. The book's organizing principal is by subject matter which means that to correlate various story line events in time requires a better memory than I own. Some may find this approach satisfying since it allows an uncluttered and easily followed trail for each story line. However the clutter, coincidence of events in time, is part of the fog of intelligence and the linear trail by subject matter potentially obscure the interaction and effects sequences of events had on each other. It is an important read in the current political season - particularly the last four chapters.

Excellent in how it told the story without blatant political overtures. There is a lot more to intelligence than technical stuff. The human side and the organizational bureaucracy and how people relate to each other was enlightening. Glad that our intelligence services are as effective as they are with all the political grandstanding that goes on in congress. I imagine the effectiveness will decline abruptly with the new Trump administration.

Although the book initiates in a dry read it progresses to shed this posture and becomes a very interesting reservoir of information on defensive and offensive cyber capabilities of the USA agencies in the first part of the 21st century by the former director of National Security Agency (NSA) and Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). This extensive memoir provides the reader with what took place in NSA and CIA after 9/11, by the 2004 Intelligence Reform Act (IRA), in these agencies

and how they protected the country defensively and then offensively. Additionally, on page 166 the reader is provided with the new American intelligence community created by IRA with the newly created Director of National Intelligence (DNI) at the top of the heap. After being trained by NSA and being in this environment interacting with NSA products during this period many questions I personally had are answered by this account. From this text it is apparent so many people lacked a basis understanding of what NSA's function was and is today. As a retired USAF officer I very much appreciate General Hayden's references and analogies to air force nomenclature and models relating to "Spy Stuff." This combined with lessons in war college twenty years ago clear the fog of "what are we learning this stuff for?" I agree with the author the public needs a deeper understanding of what American Intelligence is and does and he lays this out quite well. The reader needs to comprehend and fully understand at least minimally the topics addressed in this book to appreciate this ongoing endeavor. Others will have much difficulty for it is not a primer on electronic spying. Hayden, although a fighter pilot by training, clearly explains how disruptive the digital age was for American Intelligence. However, this book needs a glossary to assist the novice with the plethora of acronyms which took me several years to adopt. Prior to reading this book I would highly recommend David Kahn's "The Code Breakers" as a primer to this arena and then Michael Smith's "The Secrets of Station X" which will place you in the frame of mind to begin to understand where General Hayden begins his memoir. I agree this is a MUST READ for anyone who desires to understand the value of signal and human intelligence and the very complex and difficult decisions involved for how far our government should go to protect our Country!

General Hayden is a prolific writer, and it needs to be stated that his ability to bring you into the room, and make you a part of conversations, and many of the most significant moments in American history is incredible. You can feel secure knowing that you just bought a very fun, relevant, and insightful book. Enjoy!

I am a committed Democrat but a security freak with 38 years service in military intelligence. GEN Hayden has done a great job of portraying the conundrum of security vs liberty and of the lack of will of the politicians, Democrat and Republican, to speak to the American public and help decide the correct balance. Indeed, he even enlightened how the politicians whipsaw back and forth on security to please their "perceived" public opinion. And by airing a more thorough recap of the

Agencies the last few decades, he also enlightened me on many of the nuances of why the decisions went the way they did and made me even prouder of our services! God please separate the DNI from the under the table political appointment process!

revealing starts out slowly but picks up a full head of steam when entering the period immediately before and after the Obama inaugurationmany facts glossed over or simply not reported by the press are exposed from snowden, to syria, to iraq, to the harsh interrogation of KSM, ground rules for rendition etc.This is a must read for anyone who cares about our country and its governance

Too often the intelligence community has to remain in the shadows in order to protect sources and methods, they don't get the opportunity to spend millions of tax payer dollars on politically biased 500+ page reports that started with the conclusion and sought the evidence to "prove" it. This book gives some of those IC workers and leaders to correct the narrative. All citizens preparing to vote in this upcoming election should not only look at how constrained and accountable these programs really were but also the differences in how their elected representatives act behind closed doors to how they act otherwise.

Book is easy to follow describes the organization and which organization due and how they collect intelligent . Book also describes the formation and current operations that are being performed from Americas intelligent organizations. Some of the leaks and scandals are also covered with addition information on key people who work within the organization

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