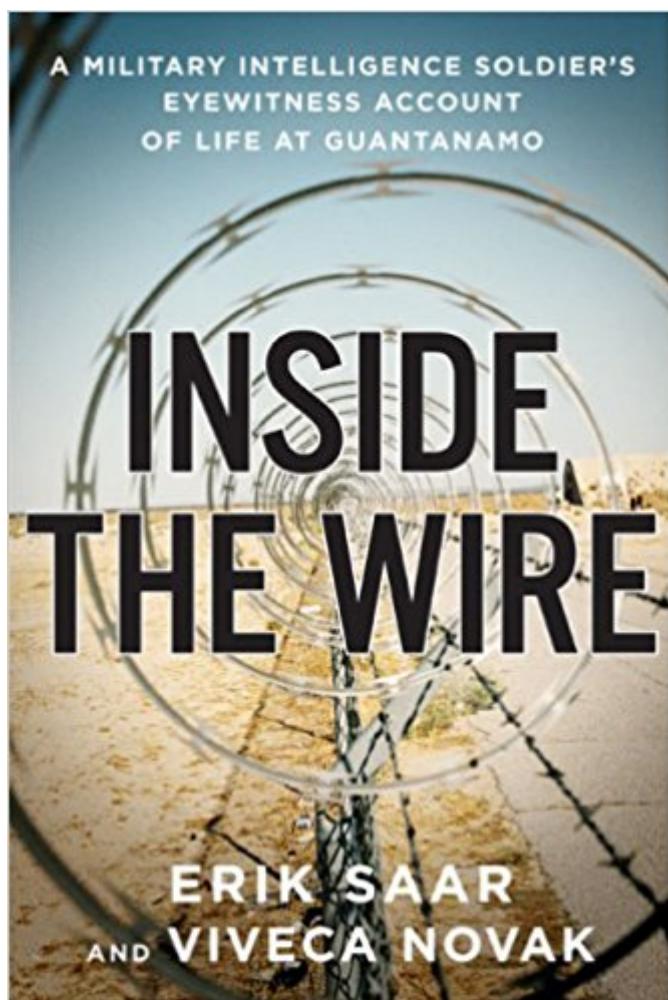


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Inside The Wire: A Military Intelligence Soldier's Eyewitness Account Of Life At Guantánamo



Synopsis

Inside the Wire is a gripping portrait of one soldier's six months at the terrorist detention center at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba - a powerful, searing journey into a surreal world completely unique in the American experience. In an explosive newsbreak that generated headlines all around the world, a document submitted by army Sergeant Erik Saar to the Pentagon for clearance was leaked to the Associated Press in January, 2005. His account of appalling sexual interrogation tactics used on detainees at Guantanamo Bay was shocking, but that was only one small part of the story of what he saw at Guantanamo -- and the leak was only one more strange twist in his profoundly disturbing and life-changing trip behind the scenes of America's war on terror. Saar couldn't have been more eager to get to Gitmo. After two years in the army learning Arabic, becoming a military intelligence linguist, he pounced on the chance to apply his new skills to extracting crucial intel from the terrorists. But when he walked through the heavily guarded, double-locked and double-gated fence line surrounding Camp Delta -- the special facility built for the "worst of the worst" al Qaeda and Taliban suspects - he entered a bizarre world that defied everything he'd expected, belied a great deal of what the Pentagon has claimed, and defiled the most cherished values of American life. In this powerful account, he takes us inside the cell blocks and interrogation rooms, face-to-face with the captives. Suicide attempts abound. Storm-trooper-like IRF (initial reaction forces) teams ramp up for beatings of the captives, and even injure one American soldier so badly in a mock drill -- a training exercise - that he ends up with brain seizures. Fake interrogations are staged when General Geoffrey Miller - whose later role in the Abu Ghraib fiasco would raise so many questions - hosts visiting VIPs. Barely trained interrogators begin applying their "creativity" when new, less restrictive rules are issued by Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld. When Saar takes over as a cosupervisor of the linguists translating for interrogations and gains access to the detainees' intelligence files, he must contend with the extent of the deceptions and the harsh reality of just how illconceived and counterproductive an operation in the war on terror, and in the history of American military engagement, the Guantanamo detention center is. Inside the Wire is one of those rare and unforgettable eyewitness accounts of a momentous and deeply sobering chapter in American history, and a powerful cautionary tale about the risks of defaming the very values we are fighting for as we wage the war on terror.

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Customer Reviews

Erik R. Saar served as an army sergeant with the U.S. military in the Detainee Camp at Guantánamo Bay, Cuba for six months from December 2002 to June 2003, working to support the intelligence and interrogation operations. Sergeant Saar is a recipient of two Good Conduct Medals, an Army Commendation Medal, a Joint Service Commendation Medal, and a Joint Service Achievement Medal. He was trained in Arabic at the Defense Language Institute in Monterey, CA. Before serving at Gitmo, he worked as an intelligence analyst for the National Security Agency at Fort Meade, MD, and for the FBI in New York City. He is a graduate of King's College in Wilkes-Barre, PA. Viveca Novak is a Washington correspondent for Time, covering legal affairs, terrorism, and civil liberties, among other issues. A recipient of Harvard University's Goldsmith Prize for investigative reporting, the Clarion Award for investigative reporting, and the Investigative Reporters and Editors Award, she is a frequent guest on the national broadcast media, including CNN, NBC, PBS, Fox, and MSNBC. She has a B.A. in foreign affairs from the University of Virginia, an M.S. from Columbia University School of Journalism, and an M.S.L. from Yale Law School.

A must read in my opinion! Didn't know all of this happened there.

If you are even remotely interested in the subject, you should read this book. I found it easy to read and informative. Erik Saar tells a story starting as an American soldier who volunteers to serve his country on the war of terror, with little information on what it was going to be like to be in Guantanamo, to someone who moves through various stages of involvement at the actual prison camp. No matter what your views of Guantanamo are, you will find this an interesting and quick read.

After reading the reviews, I was very surprised at the number of former/current GITMO personnel that buy and review books on .com. This is truly an untapped market! Evidently this is the ONLY book being read at GITMO, since they have never reviewed anything else on .com. Ok, I'm finished with the sarcasm. The book was an easy read. The details were disturbing. Is it fact/fiction? It's up to the reader to decide. Unfortunately we don't have any nice digital photos floating around on the internet to verify the author's account. Many are quick to dismiss his version of events. But then again, if someone had written a book about soldiers in Iraq leading detainees around on leases, making them masturbate, stacking them naked in a pyramid... I would be inclined to think it was fiction too. Now if only we could find some photos from GITMO.

I ordered this book after watching the HBO documentary, "Taxi to the Darkside", which discusses the human rights violations in Abu Ghraib and GITMO. I had hoped that this book would be more of a tell-all exposé' that would shed more light on the torture and treatment of the supposed terrorists being held there. Instead I found a somewhat light-hearted book about general day to day life of an intel soldier at a military prison. It was so light-hearted in some areas that it even made me wonder if what he was saying was true or was he also trying to cover up some of the negative aspects of the prison. His time spent in interrogations was very limited and he had no access to some of the most valuable and interesting inmates being held there. On the other hand I did not feel like I wasted my money on the book because it was very well written and although it wasn't what I was looking for I did find it to be a genuine interesting book that I read from cover to cover.

Erik Saar is to be commended for taking the military establishment to task. The "good old boys club" of military brass acts with impunity, totally sanctioned by the current corrupt administration. This book tells it as it happened and continues to happen. The author is a sensitive gentleman who is not afraid to speak his mind about what has become an intolerable embarrassment to the United States. This should be required reading for all students of American history because it is just that, history in the making that will eventually have far-ranging negative consequences.

I found this book very informative and interesting. I thought it presented a balanced view of the conditions of prisoners at Guantanamo Bay, based on the experiences of the author Erik Saar. I learned a lot, and gained much appreciation for the challenges facing both sides of the issue.

Erik Saar's book is a very breezy, informative read, and seems to me to accurately reflect the duties, skill levels and personal attitudes of military linguists and interrogators and the atmosphere of two American prison facilities I have seen. The scenarios in the prologue brought many smiles to this reader, a former Army and Air Force linguist trained 30 years earlier than Saar. I had to chuckle when reading the reader reviews critical of Saar's Arabic language skills. An incredibly difficult language, much harder than the languages of Southeast Asia which fell to me and my generation. Saar tells us in his book that he had his fair share of trouble during language training. Who did not? I've had very brief and disappointing experiences inside one of our prisons in Iraq and another in Afghanistan, and never once saw an American who could interrogate at a professional level in Arabic or Pashto, not one. There must be a few out there, but they are rare creatures. We are doing the best we can in a war for which we were almost totally unprepared. I'm hoping that one of the brilliant Titan ethnic Iraqi or Afghan naturalized American citizens who carry the heavy interpreter burden will write his own memoirs about the trials and tribulations of assisting in these interrogations. These interpreters and native speakers have stories that will knock your socks off when compared to those told by young interrogators. The contract interpreters hold the true key insights into our by now well-recognized failures in the war on terror, and our failure to investigate their reactions disappoints me deeply. Saar does mention these contract linguists, and clearly has learned much from his association with them. I see nothing in Saar's story that rings untrue. The spotless reputation of the FBI in regard to prisoner handling and enlightened interrogation strategies is still intact, and I would hope that any American who reads the internal FBI complaints which came out of Guantanamo has come to accept by now that our efforts have fallen short of the mark. [They always do fall short in many ways; perhaps that is easier for us older and more jaded veterans to recognize and admit.] The appendix of "Inside the Wire" is a good collection of key policy documents which help us understand some of the origins of this debacle. Erik Saar leaves me with the impression that he is a fine young man with a good heart, naive in the best and most traditional American way, expecting our actions in an ugly environment to match our declared American ideals and way of life. Sad to say, wars are not humane endeavors, precisely why we should undertake them only as last resort, so as not to bring ourselves down to our enemies' level. My personal feelings are that we would serve the long term goals of the United States much more effectively by treating these prisons as political reorientation facilities, viewing any information obtained as secondary to our primary goal of demonstrating by unfailing example to our prisoners what the American people truly stand for. Any military prison is a complicated environment which arouses instinctive animal passions, reflexive brands of patriotism, bigotry, religious convictions both radical

and reasonable, and deep-seated feelings of what is fair play and what is beyond the pale. Don't look for "heroism" in our interrogators or guards. Saar shows great insight into all of these diverse factors, and gives us detailed observations of the best and the worst of us at work at Guantanamo. Heroism in prison is reserved only for prisoners. Our prisoners who survived the abuses of the Vietnamese communists are our best example of that. The best any interrogator, interpreter, or guard can do is to remain human. Erik Saar has made a contribution in the best way he could, and I admire his efforts and his service to our nation. I highly recommend "Inside the Wire" to anyone who understands that a sense of compassion and fair play is a prerequisite to being able to call oneself an American at heart, not merely an American by accident of birth.

So far I didn't get the purchase. Obviously the German Postal Service sent it back to... So I would kindly ask you to send it again...otherwise I cannot rate anything. Sincerely, Stefan Schaller

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