



# Still Broken: A Recruit's Inside Account of Intelligence Failures, from Baghdad to the Pentagon

*A. J. Rossmiller*

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"Graduating from college with a degree in Middle East studies, Rossmiller joined the Defense Department's Intelligence Agency in 2004 and soon volunteered to join a DIA unit in Iraq. He vividly recounts his six-month tour—the physical misery of the environment and the frustrations of feeling his work rarely made a difference. Good intelligence, he explains, begins with people on the spot (in this case usually Iraqis), who take risks but supply information that is often fragmented, out-of-date and even self-serving or false. Analysts, such as the author, tease out useful data and deliver it quickly to fighting men. Hobbled by clueless superiors and their turf wars, as well as ignorance of Iraqi culture, DIA units, including Rossmiller's, witnessed American forces repeatedly acting on poor or outdated intelligence. They killed and arrested plenty of genuine insurgents but also killed, arrested and infuriated many innocent Iraqis, which crippled their efforts. Back in Washington, Rossmiller discovered the agency under pressure to provide good news for the Bush administration. Superiors regularly rejected his analyses of Iraqi politics as "too pessimistic." If repeated rewrites lacked an upbeat conclusion, superiors inserted one. That his predictions turned out to be correct made no difference. This intense, partisan arm-twisting devastated morale, resulting in an exodus of agency experts, including the author. Rossmiller gives a lively insider's view of the petty and not-so-petty politics that affect the intelligence our leaders receive in their efforts to pacify Iraq; it is not a pretty picture."

**-Publishers Weekly**

After 9/11, billions of dollars were spent to overhaul America's dysfunctional intelligence services, which were mired in bureaucracy, turf wars, and dated technology. But in this astonishing new book, A. J. Rossmiller, a former Defense Intelligence Agency analyst honored for his efforts here and in Iraq, reveals firsthand evidence that the intelligence system remains in disrepair. *Still Broken* is a blistering account of the ideology and incompetence that cripple our efforts to confront our enemies and fight our wars.

Like many Americans, Rossmiller was moved to action by the attacks on 9/11. Freshly graduated from Middlebury College, he went to work for the U.S. government in 2004. But his enthusiasm slowly turned to disillusion as he began to fulfill his duties for DIA, the spy arm of the Department of Defense. There he found the Cold War and 9/11 generations at odds, the cause of fighting terrorism superseded by the need to contain a dismally managed war in Iraq, the Bush administration widely mocked and distrusted, and the intelligence process crippled from top to bottom.

Rather than give up, Rossmiller instead went further, volunteering to go to Iraq to aid the troops on the ground, contribute to tactical intelligence, and, he hoped, help bring about an end to a fatally mismanaged war. For six months in that besieged country, he worked for the Direct Action Cell, the "track 'em and whack 'em" unit devoted to unmasking and targeting insurgents. He learned that, to put it mildly,

the intelligence process bears no resemblance to the streamlined, well-resourced, and timely operation in a James Bond or Jason Bourne movie. He also experienced the disastrous counterterrorism and detainee strategies for which mass imprisonment—with little interest in guilt or innocence—is standard operating procedure.

Back at the Pentagon as a strategic issues expert in the Office of Iraq Analysis, Rossmiller saw the administration's heavy hand in determining how information is processed. In a dysfunctional office filled with outsize personalities and the constant drone of Fox News, he filed reports on the ever-worsening situation in Iraq. These assessments, ultimately proven accurate, were consistently rejected as "too pessimistic" and "off message" and repeatedly changed to be more in line with delusional White House projections.

Written with passion, intensity, and self-deprecating humor, *Still Broken* is a riveting and sobering portrait of Bush-era intelligence failures and manipulations, laid out by someone who witnessed them up close and personal. It also offers a sincere, thoughtful prescription for healing the system so that a new and motivated generation won't disengage completely from its government.

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