

## Review of *To Catch A Spy: The Art of Counterintelligence* by James M. Olson

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Since 2010, when the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) announced it had arrested Russian intelligence officers working under illegal cover as part of the bureau's Operation Ghost Stories, public exposure to the trials and tribulations of US counterintelligence (CI) has generated an even helping of questions, intrigue, confusion, and apathy. Within this decade, that exposure has increased dramatically on the popular-image front following the success of the dark, family-oriented "espionage" drama, *The Americans*, on FX. The show followed on the heels of Operation Ghost Stories, from which it drew inspiration and creativity.

Recently, the Office of Special Counsel, Robert S. Mueller, III., released its much-anticipated "Mueller Report", which details exhaustively the tradecraft Russia used in influencing the 2016 election cycle in order to parry rising favor of the Clinton Campaign. The report was damning, not only for the current president (obstructive behavior, coordination with Russia on multiple fronts, as well as with a hostile, digital-state actor, WikiLeaks); but also for US counterintelligence, which appeared to more than have its hands full with the social media-led attacks by Russia and allied-actors on US democracy, its institutions, and its ideals. US democracy was heavily scarred following the 2016 election cycle attacks, aiding the rising tide of nationalism and authoritarianism, creating even more headaches for the US intelligence community (IC).

Over the last few years, public exposure to counterintelligence has increased dramatically following the wake of revelations surrounding the various investigations

and inquiries by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and the U.S. intelligence community (IC) into the murky links between the Trump Campaign, the Trump Administration, and Russia's vast intelligence services and related intermediaries. Since 2016, counterintelligence has come to the forefront of many social media platforms. As often happens when a complex subject enters the public discourse sphere—especially within social media—the what, how, and why of counterintelligence becomes further diluted and bracketed with outright falsehoods. In an age of extreme polarity among US citizens, counterintelligence is often viewed with two lenses: Sinister and part of the so-called (synthetic) “deep state,” or as a necessary function in safeguarding US citizens and US government interests, such as intellectual property rights, economic standing, and the critical infrastructure grid.

Thankfully, a recent book by former chief of Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) counterintelligence, James M. Olson, attempts to shed some light on what counterintelligence is and is not. Mr. Olson begins with a focus on China, and rightly so. China's aggressive espionage campaign in the US is correlated with its rise in domestic, international, and economic power under Xi Jinping. Olson discusses China's Ministry for State Security (MSS) and the People's Liberation Army (PLA), two of China's effective intelligence services. Both services, Olson notes, “make regular use of diplomatic, commercial, journalistic, and student covers for their operations in the United States.” Mr. Olson's opening chapter on China sets the overall tone for his book: The US has its hands full and is stretched thin in matters concerning counterintelligence threats and developments.

Olson discusses Russia, long an intelligence adversary to the US, and an adversary which remains fiercely competitive for the foreseeable future. Olson also

discusses Cuba, the small—in scope and scale—but also damaging-for-its-size island nation with formidable intelligence services. Olson reminds us that Cuba successfully recruited and gained access to Ana Montes, a US Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) analyst with an unusual penchant for Cuban affairs, for 16 years.

The book includes Mr. Olson's early 2000s paper titled, "The Ten Commandments of Counterintelligence," as chapter four. This paper is often the first search result many people come across when performing Internet searches for "counterintelligence." Olson first wrote and published "The Ten Commandments" in 2001, when the US shifted its foreign policy and national security focus wholly over to matters of counterterrorism in the wake of September 11th, 2001 (9/11). Much like the case of Ana Montes was quickly forgotten in the immediate post-9/11 era, so, too was Olson's experience-based guidelines of counterintelligence. Olson is wise to bring back to the fore this piece in his book, as it is now considered a classic in counterintelligence literature.

Mr. Olson presents some relatively new information concerning counterintelligence cases (much information may appear "outdated" to the casual reader; this is due to the concept of protecting sources and methods, and that not all espionage cases make it to the courtroom, for the same reason.) His case studies are useful reviews for the old hands and for those just beginning to view counterintelligence as a potential career field. At the end of each case study, Olson presents a "lessons learned" section in which to reinforce CI concepts, based on the outcomes of various counterintelligence cases. Olson offers a useful text for students wishing to learn more about U.S. counterintelligence cases, operations, and concepts.

Additionally, Olson includes a chapter on workplace counterintelligence. The workforce isn't primarily concerned with counterintelligence as it is with the bottom line and how well it is playing the numbers game. Unfortunately, the US workforce and its many workplaces are ripe for the picking by foreign intelligence services due to the inherent porosity of security protocols and security mindfulness amongst employees. (Most people are seemingly in a job just to pay the bills, and workplace counterintelligence is not on their mind.) Increasingly, many companies are waking up to the cold fact that US businesses are prime targets for foreign intelligence services, and no business organization is immune from the worst potential damage -- the insider threat. Where high politics and military plans were the target of the day among foreign intelligence services in the 1980s, US workforce data and technology are the prime targets today, from the global conglomerates to the obscure, small shop that has a prized contract with the US government.

To wrap up his book, Olson includes his recommendations of intelligence and counterintelligence literature. Notably absent, however, are *Circle of Treason: A CIA Account of Traitor Aldrich Ames and the Men He Betrayed* by Sandra Grimes and Jeanne Vertefeuille, and *State Department Counterintelligence: Spies, Leaks, and Lies* by Robert David Booth, and *The C.I. Desk: FBI and CIA Counterintelligence As Seen From My Cubicle* by Christopher Lynch.

Overall, this book is clear and concise in its message and is useful for students, practitioners, and those generally curious about counterintelligence.