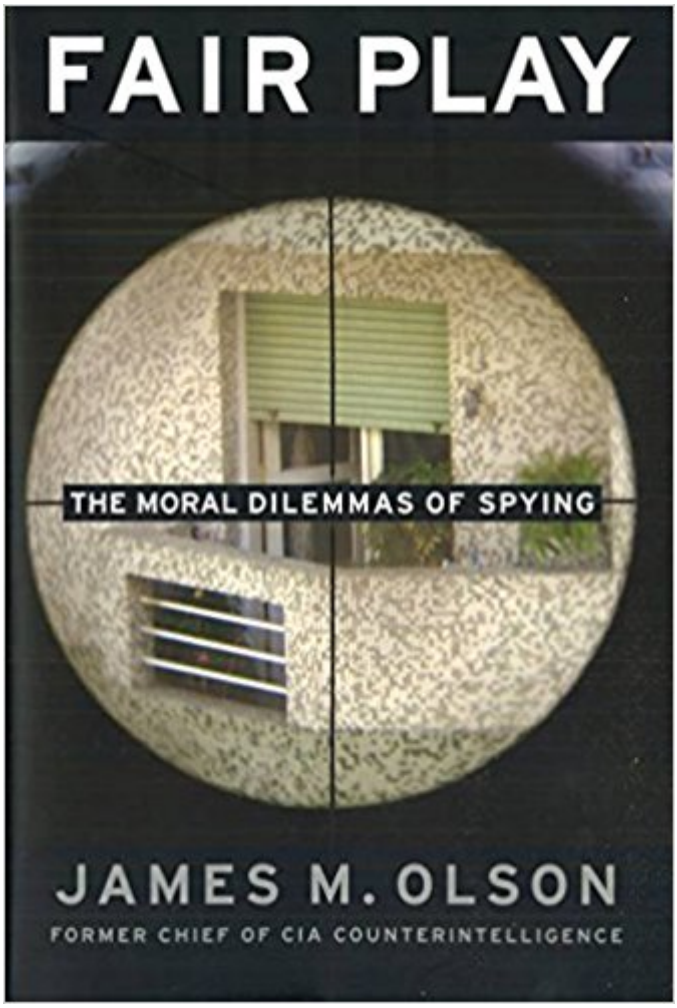
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Fair Play: The Moral Dilemmas Of Spying



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Synopsis

Revolutionary War officer Nathan Hale, one of AmericaÃ¢â ¬â„¢s first spies, said, Ã¢â ¬Å“Any kind of service necessary to the public good becomes honorable by being necessary.Ã¢â ¬Â• A statue of Hale stands outside CIA headquarters, and the agency often cites his statement as one of its guiding principles. But who decides what is necessary for the public good, and is it really true that any kind of service is permissible for the public good? These questions are at the heart of James M. OlsonÃ¢â ¬â„¢s book, Fair Play: The Moral Dilemmas of Spying. Olson, a veteran of the CIAÃ¢â ¬â„¢s clandestine service, takes readers inside the real world of intelligence to describe the difficult dilemmas that field officers face on an almost daily basis. Far from being a dry theoretical treatise, this fascinating book uses actual intelligence operations to illustrate how murky their moral choices can be. Readers will be surprised to learn that the CIA provides very little guidance on what is, or is not, permissible. Rather than empowering field officers, the author has found that this lack of guidelines actually hampers operations. Olson believes that U.S. intelligence officers need clearer moral guidelines to make correct, quick decisions. Significantly, he believes these guidelines should come from the American public, not from closed-door meetings inside the intelligence community. Fair Play will encourage a broad public debate about the proper moral limits on U.S. intelligence activities.

Book Information

Paperback: 306 pages

Publisher: Potomac Books; 1 edition (December 30, 2007)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1597971537

ISBN-13: 978-1597971539

Product Dimensions: 6 x 0.9 x 8.9 inches

Shipping Weight: 1 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.5 out of 5 stars 50 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #33,917 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #35 inÃ Â Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Politics & Government > Specific Topics > Political Freedom #58 inÃ Â Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Politics & Government > Specific Topics > Terrorism #73 inÃ Â Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Politics & Government > Specific Topics > Intelligence & Espionage

Customer Reviews

"A thoughtful, provocative analysis of practically every possible moral dilemma that is ever likely to

prick the conscience of an assiduous case officer. The scenarios presented by James Olson, himself a veteran insider, have the authentic whiff of cordite that suggest little has been drawn from his imagination, but much has been looted from the operational files."Ã¢â ¬â •Nigel West, author of The Third Secret: The CIA, Solidarity and the KGB's Plot to Kill the Pope (Nigel West)"James Olson is a legend in the clandestine service, having served in some of the most difficult, dangerous, and complicated assignments at the height of the Cold War. As director of central intelligence, I trusted him without reservation when he was chief of counterintelligence not only because he was enormously capable but also because I knew he thought deeply about the ethical and moral dimensions of what we did every day. Amid the countless books and memoirs of retired spies, especially at this time, this one is essential reading."Ã¢â ¬â •Robert M. Gates, Director of Central Intelligence, 1991-1993 (Robert M. Gates)"Under veteran intelligence officer James OlsonÃ¢â ¬â„¢s sure direction, the reader enters a world few Americans ever see or even know exists. From his insightful summary of intelligence history through each of his fifty reality-based scenarios, he confronts the difficult ethical issues head-on. An unprecedented examination of the challenging moral dilemmas of human intelligence operations, OlsonÃ¢â ¬â„¢s work will soon be the standard reference."Ã¢â ¬â •Peter Earnest, executive director, International Spy Museum, and former CIA officer (Peter Earnest)"James Olson has deftly plumbed the depths of the spyÃ¢â ¬â„¢s dilemma: How can one spend a lifetime practicing deception and still retain a strong moral compass? Fair Play is the primer on how to balance a little bit of evil so it will yield the maximum benefit to the common good. A must read."Ã¢â ¬â •Antonio J. Mendez, former CIA officer and author of The Master of Disguise: My Secret Life in the CIA (Antonio J. Mendez)"Do the ends ever justify the means? CIA veteran James Olson explores the complex choices, limitations, and moral dilemmas facing U.S. intelligence officers who attempt to operate within an ill-defined standard of Ã¢â ¬Ëœacceptable moral behavior.Ã¢â ¬â„¢ Fascinating and thought provoking, Fair Play will become a must-read for officers on the frontlines of the global war on terror. There isnÃ¢â ¬â„¢t anything else like it!"Ã¢â ¬â •H. Keith Melton, intelligence historian and author of Ultimate Spy (H. Keith Melton)"A unique, compelling read."Ã¢â ¬â •Midwest Book Review (Midwest Book Review)

"You’ve heard of business ethics, medical ethics, even journalistic ethics? Spying ethics predictably took a little longer to come in from the cold. Yet Fair Play could well become the anchoring text of a new field. As sharp as a stiletto-fitted umbrella, as tough as can be, Olson proves remarkably humane about how to balance dirty tricks with high ideals. He brings startling clarity to issues of official lying and worse." --Carlin Romano, Philadelphia Inquirer, Sunday, February 11, 2007 "A

thoughtful, provocative analysis of practically every possible moral dilemma that is ever likely to prick the conscience of an assiduous case officer. The scenarios presented by James Olson, himself a veteran insider, have the authentic whiff of cordite that suggest little has been drawn from his imagination, but much has been looted from the operational files." -- Nigel West, author of The Third Secret: The CIA, Solidarity and the KGB's Plot to Kill the Pope "James Olson is a legend in the clandestine service, having served in some of the most difficult, dangerous, and complicated assignments at the height of the Cold War. As director of central intelligence, I trusted him without reservation when he was chief of counterintelligence not only because he was enormously capable but also because I knew he thought deeply about the ethical and moral dimensions of what we did every day. Amid the countless books and memoirs of retired spies, especially at this time, this one is essential reading." -- Robert M. Gates, Director of Central Intelligence, 1991-1993 "Under veteran intelligence officer James Olson's sure direction, the reader enters a world few Americans ever see or even know exists. From his insightful summary of intelligence history through each of his fifty reality-based scenarios, he confronts the difficult ethical issues head-on. An unprecedented examination of the challenging moral dilemmas of human intelligence operations, Olson's work will soon be the standard reference." -- Peter Earnest, executive director, International Spy Museum, and former CIA officer "James Olson has deftly plumbed the depths of the spy's dilemma: How can one spend a lifetime practicing deception and still retain a strong moral compass? Fair Play is the primer on how to balance a little bit of evil so it will yield the maximum benefit to the common good. A must read." --Antonio J. Mendez, former CIA officer and author of The Master of Disguise: My Secret Life in the CIA "Do the ends ever justify the means? CIA veteran James Olson explores the complex choices, limitations, and moral dilemmas facing U.S. intelligence officers who attempt to operate within an ill-defined standard of `acceptable moral behavior.' Fascinating and thought provoking, Fair Play will become a must-read for officers on the frontlines of the global war on terror. There isn't anything else like it!" --H. Keith Melton, intelligence historian and author of Ultimate Spy "James Olson, a retired operations officer cum teacher and author, has given the literature of intelligence one of its most interesting, unusual, and forthright books." -- Hayden Peake, Historical Intelligence Collection, CIA, printed with permission from the reviewer in the Association of Former Intelligence Officers Newsletter "Fair Play is an eye-opener to the average American citizen like me who just assumed that the rules were pretty much set in concrete. Nothing could be farther from the truth...Olson's book will lead to discussions in our nation that will lead to better defined 'rules of engagement' for our CIA case officers." --Michael Caudle, Military Ink --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

Jim Olson is a true patriot. While I was hoping for cloak and dagger spy stories, this book is about what the title says - no subterfuge here. Having said that, I was bored as he wrestled with his theme citing philosophers, some long-gone and others fairly new, quoting their writings, and even scripture, on both sides of the dilemma. I personally side with those who say you gotta do what you gotta do and let the moralists agonize over it. In fairness I thought the scenarios he presented at the end were very good, thought provoking.

Professor Olson is the most engaging professor I have ever known through 13 years of collegiate level training. He is a passionate hero, an amazing story teller, and a gifted discussion leader. Those attributes blend well within his book as he tells the story through his eyes while blending viewpoints from others to create a fascinating text. A wonderful read for scholars, historians, and any student of government service.

Not only does it address interesting moral questions, but frankly its anecdotes offer a better overview of intelligence operations than ponderous tomes like Lowenthal’s (especially for the time to read).

A more accurate description might be: "The ethical issues of getting what you want". It’s not a quick read. There are a lot of thought provoking issues that may be better presented in a seminar as this seems to be how the book is written. We get the issue and then get a number of opinions on that issue summed up by the author. But in the reading; one is likely to develop their own opinion that doesn’t square with any that are presented. It’s a very "heavy" read.

Fascinating book by a fascinating man. Met him recently at a talk he gave regarding his career in the CIA. Immediately bought the book and loved it. Note: the books is about 100 pages of his experience then another hundred or so of hypothetical situations involving the "morality" or ethics of espionage that he and a panel of lay people and experts discuss.

This book is a real mind twister. If you have ever wanted to look at the world through the eyes of an intelligence officer, this book will walk your through the many moral conflicts that you will have to end up weighing for yourself. Read this book with friends so that you can then discuss the various scenarios that are proposed in the book and debate how you would handle each situation.

Olson does an outstanding job in showing the very nature of questionable motives and moral issues within the book. Issues are made up to show two and sometimes three different sides to the example by select staff and practitioners to include a few students that are very thought provoking. James Olson has a unique way of explaining details and connecting with the reader. Making it easy to understand the example and form your own decision before reading the feedback.

Fantastic book. Eye opening into the brass tacks and practicality of moral and ethical issues faced by intelligence professionals in an increasingly murky world.

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