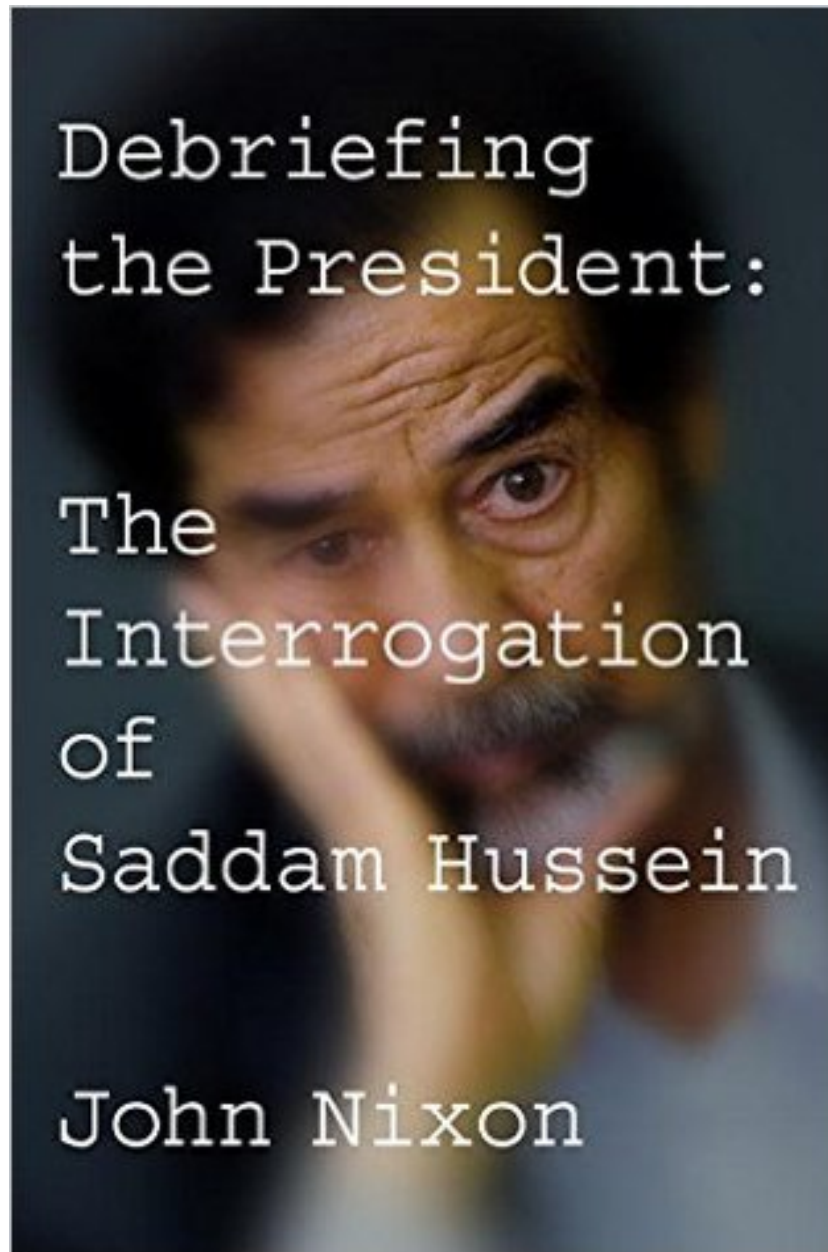


Debriefing the President: The Interrogation of Saddam Hussein Book PDF Download



**By:
John Nixon**

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Christopher Lawson

For Years At The CIA, I Lived And Breathed Saddam

DEBRIEFING THE PRESIDENT is an informative look into the life of a senior CIA analyst, John Nixon, who happens to also be the one who debriefed Saddam Hussein. When he was first confronted with the dictator, Nixon thought, "Holy shit, it's Saddam!" Nixon was introduced as "Mr. Steve."

Although he spoke cordially with Hussein, the author makes it clear that he wasn't fooled; he knew exactly what this man stood for: "He was a ruthless dictator who,

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Although he spoke cordially with Hussein, the author makes it clear that he wasn't fooled; he knew exactly what this man stood for: "He was a ruthless dictator who, at times, made decisions that plunged his region into chaos and bloodshed." And, "Saddam was tough, shrewd, and manipulative."

The author explains that for interrogating Hussein, he was given a \$75 gift certificate to a local Italian restaurant!

Nixon believes, like many others, that the U.S. effort to capture the dictator was misguided, and came at too high a price. Looking back, it just seemed not worth it: "In hindsight, the thought of having Saddam Hussein in power seems almost comforting in comparison with the awful events and wasted effort of America's brave young men and women in uniform, not to mention the \$ 3 trillion and still counting we have spent to build a new Iraq."

Nixon's offers withering criticism of the Bush administration; they just didn't understand Iraq, and especially Saddam: "The United States had vastly misunderstood both him and his role as a determined foe of radical currents in the Islamic world, including Sunni extremism." Nixon sees Saddam's removal as a tragic mistake, with lots of unintended consequences: "Saddam's removal created a power vacuum that turned religious differences in Iraq into a sectarian bloodbath."

DEBRIEFING THE PRESIDENT is a deadly serious book, but it does have a few light moments.

Describing the CIA staff living in Iraq, Nixon recalls their poor conditions: "We lived in trailers, and often four or five of us were packed into each one." Longing for American food was common, and there was a single "Burger King" restaurant not too far away--they just had to make sure they weren't blown up on the way there: "Like other service personnel, CIA officers made special trips to the airport, braving the gauntlet of improvised explosive devices (IEDs) for a Whopper and fries."

Ziad Fahom

"In foreign affairs, the United States is constantly reinventing the wheel by quickly forgetting the lessons learned from the last war. Just as people forget pain, the United States develops a case of amnesia about the blood and treasure expended in a military conflict. We celebrate victories but don't hold the government fully accountable when the use of force does not achieve its objectives, or leaves chaos in its wake.

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Watching the grainy cell phone images being taped by Maliki's national security adviser, Muaffaq al-Rubai, I was struck that Saddam looked like the most dignified person in the room. He handled the occasion as I expected he would - defiant and unafraid to the end. It was a rushed execution in a dark basement in Baghdad. For me, the final pillar justifying Operation Iraqi Freedom had collapsed. Saddam was not a likable guy. The more you got to know him, the less you liked him. He had committed horrible crimes against humanity. But we had come to Iraq saying that we would make things better. We would bring democracy and the rule of law. No longer would people be awakened by a threatening knock on the door. And here we were, allowing Saddam to be hanged in the middle of the night."

Spot on.

Murtaza

Firsthand accounts of historical figures have always been fascinating to me, and this is a particularly captivating recollection by a former CIA officer of his interrogations of Saddam Hussein. John Nixon studied Saddam from afar for years, and later had the rare opportunity of confronting him face to face in weeks of interviews. The simple fact of having quotes from Saddam is amazing, but Nixon is also a smart interlocutor and writer. He eschews cliches and gives a humane and thoughtful account

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A few things that are particularly striking are Nixon's accounts of the organizational dysfunction within the U.S. government and the CIA in particular. The CIA has a public reputation as a highly sophisticated (and nefarious) organization, but from his telling it functions just like any other dysfunctional bureaucracy. While it accomplishes its goals sometimes, it is also full of departmental politics, careerists and time-servers. It is notable that some of those tasked with interviewing Saddam, a highly consequential role, didn't have much knowledge or experience on the subject. Nixon himself had only a few years of study on Iraq and the Middle East and evidently spoke little Arabic (despite this, he seemed to be among the most knowledgeable about Saddam in the CIA). Many others in sensitive roles seemed to be similarly situated. It's a reminder that all organizations, even the CIA, are full of people of varying degrees of knowledge and skill, and there are few if any large bureaucracies that are full of supermen. Through his work he also spends some time briefing George W. Bush and Dick Cheney, and has interesting insights on both (he describes Bush as "an asshole" at one point when he makes a snide comment at him during a briefing).

The subtext to the entire book is Nixon's relationship with Saddam. The surreality of confronting Saddam in the flesh after years of studying him is well conveyed. Through their conversations he grapples with the difficult question of what America's role should have been when dealing with an undeniably murderous ruler like Saddam. Ultimately, he takes a pragmatic perspective, arguing that Saddam, while a heinous individual, was not the Hitlerian figure he had been caricatured as in the United States. Nixon argues instead that Saddam was a product of the political environment in his country. He describes him as parochial and unworldly, but deeply knowledgeable about the currents of his own society; far more so than those who invaded and attempted to make a new political order in the void that he left. Ultimately Nixon describes the invasion as a great error, citing reasons that are humane and thoughtful, regardless of one's own beliefs.

All in all this is an excellent book, lucidly written and by an author who comes across as quite

likeable and self-reflective. Close-quarters accounts of history are always engaging, and this is a particularly good example.

Chuck

4-stars

Trust me, you don't wanna read this. It's so much easier to believe the blowhards on Fox News. Just forget what the CIA's top expert on the matter has to say. And just forget the fact that Saddam neither had WMDs nor a thing to do with 9/11. And why should it matter that Saddam thought the attack on 9/11 should actually bring our countries closer together? Because the religious lunatics that attacked us were his enemies as well. It isn't like Cheney and Rumsfeld and company had been plott

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Keith CARTER

Excellent read, this book really opened my eyes regarding the invasion of Iraq by coalition forces. Nixon was one of the first of many agents of the CIA to debrief Saddam and although the man was a monster he also comes across as intelligent and articulate who was also proud of his country. But most of all it shows us that the U S had absolutely no plan for post-invasion Iraq. Bush Jnr seems to me to be nothing more than (if you will pardon my language) an A-----E.. This is not my normal choice

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