



Pentagon to Buy 10,000 Copies of Afghan War Memoir

The ostensibly offensive book was written by Anthony Shafer and is entitled *Operation Dark Heart*. Shafer is a former Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) officer and a lieutenant in the Army Reserve. According to reviewers in the intelligence community, Shafer reveals too many harmful details of the behind-the-scenes machinations of the War in Afghanistan, almost nine years since it began in the wake of the attacks of September 11.

While such attempts by officialdom to censor books written by former insiders are de rigueur at this point, no one interviewed for a *New York Times* article on the subject could remember a time when the Pentagon wanted to prevent publication of a book ex post facto.

The *New York Times* article recounts the slog through the Army/Intelligence gauntlet already taken by Shafer's book pre-publishing. After reading the manuscript, the Army proposed a few changes that were made by the publisher, St. Martin's Press, and the book was put on the calendar for an August 31 release date.

According to the timeline, however, the DIA wasn't present at the reading and after combing through the tome in July, over 200 passages were flagged that DIA insisted revealed classified information and could not be released to the public without harm to the national security of the United States and its allies/assets. A spokesman for the DIA named the CIA, the National Security Agency, and the United States Special Operations Command as witnesses of the book's clear and present danger in its unedited iteration.

One particularly noxious revelation made by the book that the Department of Defense is most concerned about is the identification by name of several American intelligence operatives and the details of their covert mission to eavesdrop using NSA resources. None of those who made such claims would comment on the record, however.

The DIA's effort to thwart publication of the book was too late, however, and copies of the book were purchased by the *New York Times* from an online bookseller. And, apparently, scores of advanced reader copies (ARC) were mailed to reviewers, as well.

Operation Dark Heart is Shafer's firsthand account of his five-month stint as a civilian DIA officer stationed at Bagram Air Base outside of Kabul, Afghanistan.

The attempt to squelch Shafer's voice and prevent purchase of his chronicle of his experiences on the ground in Afghanistan is but the latest battle in the Obama administration's protracted war to clamp down on all "leaks" of any jot or tittle it deems "classified." The *New York Times* piece cites three examples of Obama administration prosecutions of such disclosures, which, says the report, has not been done since 1985.

The problem, obvious to all, is that the distinction between information that is genuinely "classified" and that which is just potentially embarrassing or incriminating to the President or Congress, is made by those with a horse in the race. That is a miscarriage of justice. As Steve Aftergood, the director of the Project on Government Secrecy at the Federation of American Scientists told the *New York Times*, the "classified" stamp is applied in a manner that is "often arbitrary and highly subjective."

For his part, the author confirmed to the *New York Times* that he, his attorney, the Pentagon, and the publisher are in negotiations over which parts of the book will be blacked out in subsequent printings of



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the book and that an agreement on the matter is imminent. What isn't settled, however, is whether or not the Pentagon is going to buy up the copies of the book that have already been printed and are sitting on pallets in a warehouse ready for shipment to the nation's booksellers. A Pentagon spokesman assured reporters that the problem would be resolved soon.

There is word this morning, however, that the Pentagon plans to not only purchase the first printing of the book, but to purchase in advance all copies published in the second printing, as well.

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