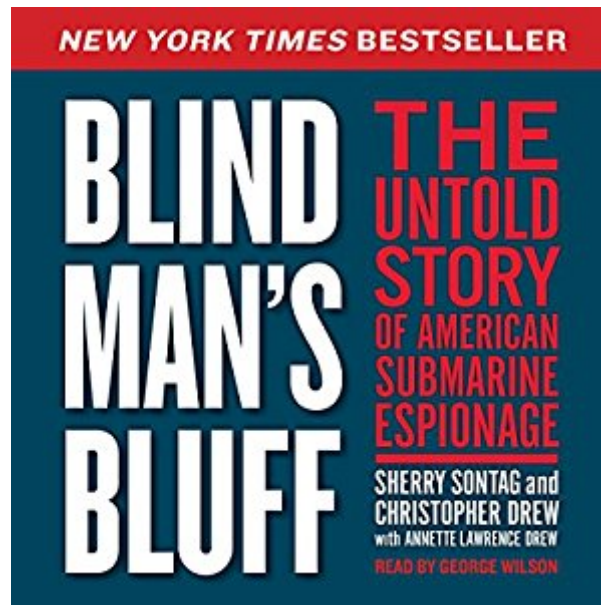


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Blind Man's Bluff: The Untold Story Of American Submarine Espionage



Synopsis

No espionage missions have been kept more secret than those involving American submarines. Now, *Blind Man's Bluff* shows for the first time how the navy sent submarines wired with self-destruct charges into the heart of Soviet seas to tap crucial underwater telephone cables. It unveils how the navy's own negligence might have been responsible for the loss of the USS *Scorpion*, a submarine that disappeared, all hands lost, 30 years ago. It tells the complete story of the audacious attempt to steal a Soviet submarine with the help of eccentric billionaire Howard Hughes and how it was doomed from the start. And it reveals how the navy used the comforting notion of deep-sea rescue vehicles to hide operations that were more James Bond than Jacques Cousteau. *Blind Man's Bluff* contains an unforgettable array of characters, including the cowboy sub commander who brazenly outraced torpedoes and couldn't resist sneaking up to within feet of unaware enemy subs. It takes us inside clandestine Washington meetings where top submarine captains briefed presidents and where the espionage war was planned one sub and one dangerous encounter at a time. Stretching from the years immediately after World War II to the operations of the Clinton administration, it is an epic story of daring and deception. A magnificent achievement in investigative reporting, it feels like a spy thriller but with one important difference: Everything in it is true.

Book Information

Audible Audio Edition

Listening Length: 15 hours and 46 minutes

Program Type: Audiobook

Version: Unabridged

Publisher: HarperAudio

Audible.com Release Date: August 9, 2016

Language: English

ASIN: B01H42F8YE

Best Sellers Rank: #6 in Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Politics & Government > Public Affairs & Policy > Public Affairs & Administration #46 in Books > Audible Audiobooks > Science > Technology & Engineering #48 in Books > History > Military > Naval

Customer Reviews

Confronted with fading memories, secrecy oaths, security clearances and old loyalties, the authors have done an outstanding job writing a fascinating account that rivals the best cold war fiction. This

is a true story of American submarine espionage during the cold war and as the authors note "In silence and stealth, but most importantly in secrecy, attack subs carried out as many as two thousand spy missions as they kept track of Soviet submarines". In chronological order, the book covers US submarine surveillance during the cold war beginning with the loss of the diesel submarine USS Cochino and ends with the post cold war secrecy problems still facing the families of lost submarine sailors on both sides. Narratives are given for several incidents such as the submarine USS Gudgeon being caught in Soviet waters and forced to the surface by the Soviets. A most intriguing chapter covers the 1968 loss of the US nuclear submarine Scorpion as it returned from a mission to the Mediterranean Sea. Using acoustic data, a submarine simulator and advanced mathematics, it took nearly five months for scientists to locate the Scorpion. Although the evidence points to an on board torpedo explosion, to this day the cause of the sub's loss is still in dispute. Blind man's bluff involved tracking Soviet subs, surveillance of missile launches and communications monitoring. Soviet subs were trailed by US submarines to determine the submarine's characteristics, patrol areas plus Soviet Naval operational philosophy and tactics. The book contains a fascinating account of the USS Lapon tracking a Soviet missile sub for 47 days. However, tracking was dangerous. There were several underwater collisions, with the text describing the one where the USS Tautog collided with the Soviet submarine Black Lila. The book states "Tautog flipped on her right side, rolling nearly 30 degrees as she was forced backward and down. Men went grabbing for a handhold on rails and tables. Coffee mugs, pencils, rulers, charts and erasers went flying through the control room." While both submarines were heavily damaged, neither sub sank, although each submarine's commander thought the other had sunk. In a post cold war interview, the Black Lila's commander stated "I thought for a second, 'I have sunk a brother submariner'....It was hard to have realized it." The book narrates the US attempt to raise a sunken Soviet submarine. After locating the sub, Naval Intelligence proposed to remove missiles and code materials using robots. The CIA disagreed, intervened, and took over. Ignoring international law, the CIA contracted with Howard Hughes to build a special ship to recover the entire submarine under the pretext of searching for manganese. The project failed with only a 38-foot piece recovered. The Naval Intelligence's approach was validated years later when Navy robots were successfully used to explore the Titanic. The book's high point is the narrative of wire taps on Soviet cables in the Sea of Okhotsk and the Soviet White Sea. Under great danger, taps were placed on Soviet military cables by divers working outside a specially equipped surveillance submarine. At considerable risk, taps were periodically serviced to recover data tapes. Servicing a tap, the Seawolf once got mired for nearly two days on the bottom of the Okhotsk Sea. To avoid detection, the secret surveillance

submarine Parche traveled 15,000 miles one way on an indirect route to place a tap on a White Sea cable and gain intelligence on Soviet Arctic operations. The Soviet's use of the Arctic ice was a critical strategic move and the authors note that "the Soviets shift to the Arctic was a brilliant move....where it would be hugely difficult for US forces to root out Soviet missile subs and destroy them." Throughout, the text describes the personalities involved discussing the differences arising between individuals, groups and agencies. The handling and briefing of the President, Congress and/or Congressional oversight committees is most interesting. A key player through much of the book is John Cavens of Naval Intelligence. Cavens and his scientists developed the techniques that successfully located the nuclear bomb dropped into the Mediterranean following an Air Force B-52 mid-air collision, located the sunken Soviet sub and pinpointed the location of the lost USS Scorpion. In summary, the text notes "While satellites replaced many of the spy planes and made intelligence-gathering safer....submarines continued to confront the Soviets directly" and concludes "There is no question that some skippers went too far in their quest for the big score. But then the Navy and the intelligence agencies weighed the gains against the possibility of a violent response, they relied on one simple fact: the Soviets were sending out their spies as well." The text ends stating that "Now, with the end of the cold war and a new phase in submarine espionage beginning, it's time to look back, time to assess what has so long been hidden." Whatever may be the reader's views regarding the cold war, the book tells how so many US Navy submarine sailors when "in harms way" so that Americans could sleep safely at night. The book finishes with appendices and notes which alone are worth the book's price. Appendix A describes nineteen confirmed or probable submarine collisions during the cold war while Appendix B gives the Soviet side of this story. Following the appendices, notes give the sources for each chapter. The principal player's remarks are often revealing. For example, Admiral Watkins, former Chief of Naval Operations, stated that he allowed the U.S. Naval Institute - a private, nonprofit organization that works closely with the Navy - to publish Tom Clancy's novel *The Hunt for Red October* as part of the Navy's psychological warfare against the Soviets. Admiral Watkins said "about two-thirds of the technical information in Clancy's novel is on target and the rest is wrong, and that it typically overstates the US abilities...." The Admiral continues that the book "did us a service....The Soviets kind of believed it, and we won the battle...."

This book is a series of long vignettes about submarine spying and operations during the Cold War. That these collections of stories are able to be told are a testament to the author's research and abilities to remove submariners from their oaths of silence. The fact that they are writing about

still classified events means *Blind Man's Bluff* lacks a central story line or continuous chronology. The authors could only relate those events that participants chose to disclose and describe. Thus, the book is very episodic as opposed to being a neat history of the subject. That being said, the stories are fascinating and moving. Thank a submariner the next time you run into one. These men risked (and still risk) a cold and silent demise in pursuit of their missions -- missions that contributed greatly to ensuring that the Soviets would not be tempted to go nuclear during the cold war due to our constant ability to keep ahead of their technology, strategy and tactics and general war fighting ability. The stories are thrill rides of missions in Soviet waters, collisions between U.S. and Soviet subs, the loss of both Russian and American boats (with all hands), and close to shore cable tapping by our navy that is as breathtaking as anything Tom Clancy could dream up. The authors do sometimes go overboard in their "breathless" writing as some of the other reviewers write, but I found this only a minor annoyance. The stories of the men and machines themselves are the focus and the authors write them well. (The only thing that nagged me through the book was the realization that so many of our naval personnel were willing to talk about events that they swore never to reveal. The authors do not spend much time on this issue. My hope is that the Navy has given the quiet ok to these veterans as a way of acknowledging their historic service. The alternative is that a large number of sworn men broke their commitment and may be making it more difficult for current submariners to perform their necessary missions.) This is fast paced, exciting and will stir your pride in our country's armed forces.

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