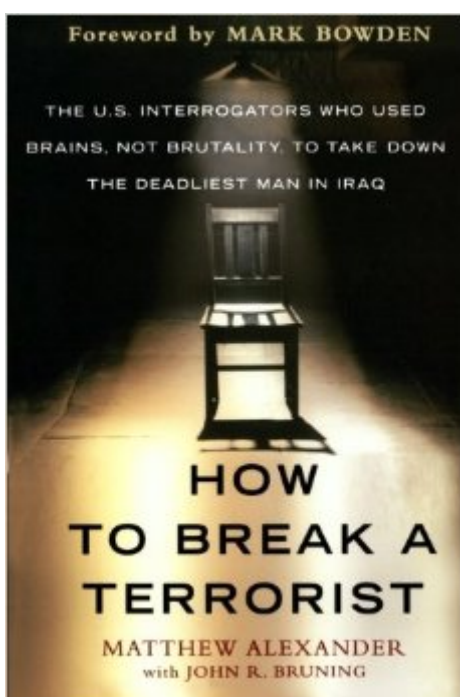


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How To Break A Terrorist: The U.S. Interrogators Who Used Brains, Not Brutality, To Take Down The Deadliest Man In Iraq



Synopsis

Finding Abu Musab al Zarqawi, the leader of Al Qaeda in Iraq, had long been the U.S. military's top priority—trumping even the search for Osama bin Laden. No brutality was spared in trying to squeeze intelligence from Zarqawi's suspected associates. But these "force on force" techniques yielded exactly nothing, and, in the wake of the Abu Ghraib scandal, the military rushed a new breed of interrogator to Iraq. Matthew Alexander, a former criminal investigator and head of a handpicked interrogation team, gives us the first inside look at the U.S. military's attempt at more civilized interrogation techniques—and their astounding success. Matthew and his team decided to get to know their opponents. Who were these monsters? Who were they working for? Every day the "haters" matched wits with a rogues' gallery of suspects brought in by Special Forces: egomaniacs, bloodthirsty adolescents, opportunistic stereo repairmen, Sunni clerics horrified by the sectarian bloodbath, al Qaeda fanatics, and good people in the wrong place at the wrong time. This account is an unputdownable thriller—more of a psychological suspense story than a war memoir—and a reminder that we don't have to become our enemy to defeat him.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I've read a number of books on the Iraq War, from soldiers' memoirs to journalists' observations. "How to Break a Terrorist" stands alone from that group, as it gives an inside look into specific tactics on the most personal level. I can see why the book ruffled some feathers—it is a complete rejection of the ways of old, and the new methods expressed in it could certainly raise some

eyebrows. Creating relationships and developing mutual respect seems counter intuitive when dealing with mass murders. Why show respect to people who would just as easily blow you up as they would sit in a room with you? And indeed, the author's inner turmoil over this point, combined with his persistent dedication to the cause (nailing Al Zargawi) and trust in new methods of interrogation, is one of the more compelling subplots of the book. The characters we meet are fascinating. I won't talk too much about that, because you should read about them yourself, but the men he interrogates are all distinctly different, and the methods he uses change based on the subject, from the street peddlers up to the final link to Al Zargawi, whose breaking requires the most creative interrogation tactic of all. To make it even more interesting, the new methods aren't even entirely accepted by the other members of the interrogation team, who prefer control tactics instead--the office politics--set in a warzone--remind us that old ways die hard. Also, as someone who only has a view of the military from the outside, I was surprised to read about the structure of the interrogation unit. Matthew is a major, but his rank doesn't matter--one of the funnier exchanges comes within the book's first few pages, when an NCO asks him if he'll have a "hard f***ing time" with a sergeant giving him orders.

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