



# Still Broken: A Recruit's Inside Account of Intelligence Failures, from Baghdad to the Pentagon

By A. J. Rossmiller

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"Graduating from college with a degree in Middle East studies, Rossmiller joined the Defense Department's Intelligence Agency in 2004 and soon volunteered to join a DIA unit in Iraq. He vividly recounts his six-month tour—the physical misery of the environment and the frustrations of feeling his work rarely made a difference. Good intelligence, he explains, begins with people on the spot (in this case usually Iraqis), who take risks but supply information that is often fragmented, out-of-date and even self-serving or false. Analysts, such as the author, tease out useful data and deliver it quickly to fighting men. Hobbled by clueless superiors and their turf wars, as well as ignorance of Iraqi culture, DIA units, including Rossmiller's, witnessed American forces repeatedly acting on poor or outdated intelligence. They killed and arrested plenty of genuine insurgents but also killed, arrested and infuriated many innocent Iraqis, which crippled their efforts. Back in Washington, Rossmiller discovered the agency under pressure to provide good news for the Bush administration. Superiors regularly rejected his analyses of Iraqi politics as "too pessimistic." If repeated rewrites lacked an upbeat conclusion, superiors inserted one. That his predictions turned out to be correct made no difference. This intense, partisan arm-twisting devastated morale, resulting in an exodus of agency experts, including the author. Rossmiller gives a lively insider's view of the petty and not-so-petty politics that affect the intelligence our leaders receive in their efforts to pacify Iraq; it is not a pretty picture."

**-Publishers Weekly**

After 9/11, billions of dollars were spent to overhaul America's dysfunctional intelligence services, which were mired in bureaucracy, turf wars, and dated technology. But in this astonishing new book, A. J. Rossmiller, a former Defense Intelligence Agency analyst honored for his efforts here and in Iraq, reveals firsthand evidence that the intelligence system remains in disrepair. Still Broken is a blistering account of the ideology and incompetence that cripple our efforts to confront our enemies and fight our wars.

Like many Americans, Rossmiller was moved to action by the attacks on 9/11. Freshly graduated from Middlebury College, he went to work for the U.S. government in 2004. But his enthusiasm slowly turned to disillusion as he began to fulfill his duties for DIA, the spy arm of the Department of Defense. There he found the Cold War and 9/11 generations at odds, the cause of fighting terrorism superseded by the need to contain a dismally managed war in Iraq, the Bush administration widely mocked and distrusted, and the intelligence process crippled from top to bottom.

Rather than give up, Rossmiller instead went further, volunteering to go to Iraq to aid the troops on the ground, contribute to tactical intelligence, and, he hoped, help bring about an end to a fatally mismanaged war. For six months in that besieged country, he worked for the Direct Action Cell, the “track ’em and whack ’em” unit devoted to unmasking and targeting insurgents. He learned that, to put it mildly,

the intelligence process bears no resemblance to the streamlined, well-resourced, and timely operation in a James Bond or Jason Bourne movie. He also experienced the disastrous counterterrorism and detainee strategies for which mass imprisonment—with little interest in guilt or innocence—is standard operating procedure.

Back at the Pentagon as a strategic issues expert in the Office of Iraq Analysis, Rossmiller saw the administration’s heavy hand in determining how information is processed. In a dysfunctional office filled with outsize personalities and the constant drone of Fox News, he filed reports on the ever-worsening situation in Iraq. These assessments, ultimately proven accurate, were consistently rejected as “too pessimistic” and “off message” and repeatedly changed to be more in line with delusional White House projections.

Written with passion, intensity, and self-deprecating humor, *Still Broken* is a riveting and sobering portrait of Bush-era intelligence failures and manipulations, laid out by someone who witnessed them up close and personal. It also offers a sincere, thoughtful prescription for healing the system so that a new and motivated generation won’t disengage completely from its government.



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## **Editorial Review**

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Review

Advance praise for Still Broken

“A. J. Rossmiller has given us a crucial piece of the Iraq debacle—a bottom-up, insider’s account of how the U.S. intelligence community has been twisted by politics and paralyzed by bureaucracy. Still Broken is also a powerful personal story of how a smart, well-educated, and patriotic young American tried to serve his country, in Iraq and in the Pentagon, and became disillusioned by the rank incompetence at the heart of the so-called ‘Global War on Terror.’ And while Rossmiller demonstrates, repeatedly, that his taste in music really needs an upgrade, he also proves to be an engaging, skillful, and funny writer.”

—Joe Klein, Time political columnist

“A gripping ground-level view of the exasperating journey of a brave intelligence analyst trying to serve his country at a time of cherry-picked, slanted, and downright deceitful intelligence. As he debriefs detainees, plans for raids in Baghdad, and offers apolitical Iraq analysis in Washington, his conscience never fails him, even as the leaders of his country do. It is one thing to decry ‘politicized intelligence,’ and another, deeper thing to live, as Rossmiller did, with the devastating consequences of ideology and ego run amok.”

—Samantha Power, Pulitzer Prize-winning author of *A Problem from Hell*

“A. J. Rossmiller is a truth-teller, a rarity today, and the title of his book—*Still Broken*—is the succinct truth about the U.S. intelligence apparatus. That apparatus is not only failing, but it is failing catastrophically. To understand part of the reason why, read Mr. Rossmiller’s book.”

—Lawrence Wilkerson, Pamela Harriman Visiting Professor of Government at the College of William & Mary, and former chief of staff to Secretary of State Colin Powell

“A. J. Rossmiller has emerged as one of the most insightful and sophisticated foreign-policy commentators

in our country. He combines a passionate patriotism and irreplaceable real-life experience with the U.S. military in documenting the profound corruption and ineptitude driving our Iraq policy. Rossmiller served his country nobly during the war, and does so again with this important and moving new book.”

—Glenn Greenwald, author of *How Would a Patriot Act?*

#### About the Author

A. J. Rossmiller, a fellow at the National Security Network, served with the Defense Intelligence Agency for nearly two years. For his work in Iraq, he was awarded the Joint Civilian Service Achievement Award and the DIA Expeditionary Medal for valorous and meritorious service. He is a contributing editor at Americablog.com, and his writing has been featured or cited in a wide variety of news and commentary outlets. Rossmiller is currently an adviser and consultant for various nonprofit and foreign policy and defense organizations, and is a member of the Truman National Security Project. He is a regular commentator on the Alhurra television network, a U.S. government-run channel that broadcasts in Arabic to the Middle East.

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