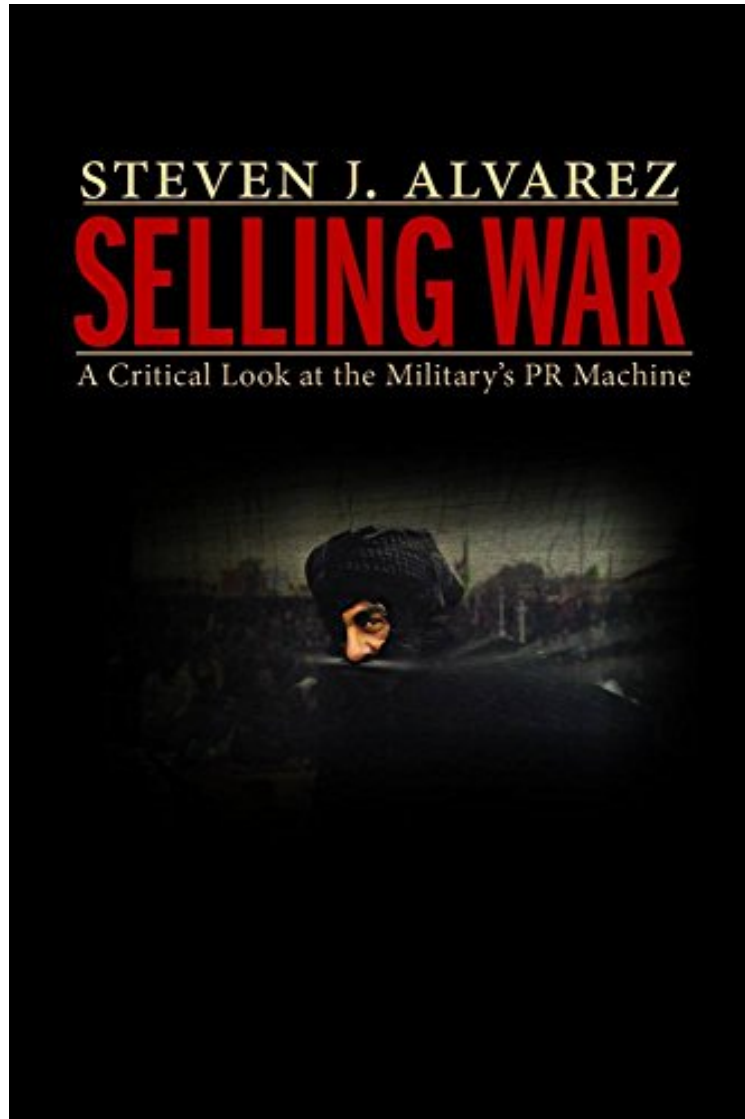


Selling War: A Critical Look at the Military's PR Machine

Steven J. Alvarez

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Steven J. Alvarez : Selling War: A Critical Look at the Military's PR Machine before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Selling War: A Critical Look at the Military's PR Machine:

5 of 5 people found the following review helpful. Steve Alvarez brilliantly paints an intricate picture of the military's information war ...By Reviewer Steve Alvarez brilliantly paints an intricate picture of the military's information war during a critical time in Iraq ndash; 2004 to 2005. The book pulls no punches and is not a "cheerleader" piece, but, rather, tells the story of one U.S. Army soldier's futile attempts at winning the public relations part of the war in his capacity as then Lt. Gen. David H. Petraeus's Public Affairs

Officer. The book reads a lot like Col. David H. Hackworth's book, "About Face," wherein a soldier that almost cares "too much about getting it right" is ultimately led to blowing the whistle about the failures of his beloved U.S. Army's operations in Vietnam because he simply cannot bear the truth of what is actually occurring any longer. Much like "About Face," "Selling War" is a passionate account of Alvarez's exhaustive and ultimately futile attempts in another—and previously unexplored—area of combat operations: the information war in Iraq. The book goes deep into the story of the U.S. military's attempts to engage the Iraqi populace through media relations, information strategies, and transparency while also balancing the crush of media relations from the American and coalition news personalities and entities crawling over themselves to get a piece of Petraeus. All this specifically coming from Alvarez's assignment as Petraeus's public affairs officer during his command of the Multinational Security Transition Command Iraq—tasked with training, equipping, and mentoring the Iraqi armed forces and police forces. Alvarez, in great detail offers riveting accounts of that crucial early phase of the Iraq occupation as it pertained to Petraeus's command and the frustratingly impossible roadblocks thrown up by his own U.S. military counterparts in the country who continually—and unfathomably—worked against his attempts to get the story out. Particularly his U.S. Army counterparts. From ground zero of the Iraqi exit strategy, Alvarez masterfully details the failed information war in Iraq with his "insider" accounts into the minutiae and incompetence at the highest levels that drove this fascinating and crucial part of the war straight over a cliff. Anyone who loves (and is disgusted by) bureaucratic military and government "chair-warrior" meddling with the "boots on the ground" who know better, would love this book that dives deep into a fascinating part of the fight that most Americans don't even know exists—including the early train wreck known as the Coalition Provisional Authority's public affairs apparatus. These riveting accounts coupled with his thorough, logical, and expert analysis and on-point solutions for correcting the Army's public affairs ills, for the future, make "Selling War" a critical piece of what should lead to changes in its training and strategic aims, going forward. "Selling War" is skillfully written and supported with exhaustive and detailed research. Alvarez is an incredibly talented writer, deftly constructing an incredible story straight from one of Iraq's highest level commands. It's enthralling in scope—a real "page turner"—leading the reader through a beautifully crafted story arc of his real life experience in Iraq working for one of the greatest general officers in American history—David Petraeus. Alvarez—at points—ran a virtual celebrity news personality turnstile consisting of every famous American and international news person you've ever heard of seeking face time with Petraeus, which makes for a fascinating read in-and-of-itself. But it also details the very high level fallout from Petraeus's meteoric rise to stardom and all the way down to the ground level efforts to supplant the old "Baghdad Bob" days of military public relations under Saddam Hussein with credible, reliable, Iraqi media relations that all Iraqis could believe in. A part of war that we never talk about. Readers will feel like they're literally reading about the "tip of the spear" of a whole other part of military operations that we never talk about. Fascinating read. Highly recommend.

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. I served with Steve in Iraq. By Elton J. I served with Steve in Iraq in 2004. He did a hell of a good job given the chaotic nature of the command structure and the US military mission in Iraq at that time. His book is a very accurate depiction of what an Army officer with his background and his duties had to deal with in Iraq at that time. A very good read.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Alvarez is a great writer and he really hits the mark in "Selling ..."

By Destry Witt. Capt. Alvarez is a great writer and he really hits the mark in "Selling War." I wasn't there, but I was Jared's NCOIC at the 104th Division (IT) before he shipped out. We experienced similar support issues state side in a Reserve PAO shop, and with his infrequent contacts back home, Jared communicated exactly what Capt. Alvarez eloquently portrays. It's a real concern and congrats to Capt. Alvarez for bringing it to light.

In the spring of 2004, army reservist and public affairs officer Steven J. Alvarez waited to be called up as the U.S. military stormed Baghdad and deposed Saddam Hussein. But soon after President Bush's famous PR stunt in which an aircraft carrier displayed the banner "Mission Accomplished," the dynamics of the war shifted. "Selling War" recounts how the U.S. military lost the information war in Iraq by engaging the wrong audiences—that is, the Western media—by ignoring Iraqi citizens and the wider Arab population, and by paying mere lip service to the directive to "Put an Iraqi face on everything." In the absence of effective communication from the U.S. military, the information void was swiftly filled by Al Qaeda and, eventually, ISIS. As a result, efforts to create and maintain a successful, stable country were complicated and eventually frustrated. Alvarez couples his experiences as a public affairs officer in Iraq with extensive research on communication and government relations to expose why communications failed and led to the breakdown on the ground. A revealing glimpse into the inner workings of the military's PR machine, where personnel become stewards of presidential legacies and keepers of flawed policies, "Selling War" provides a critical review of the outdated communication strategies executed in Iraq. Alvarez's candid account demonstrates how a fundamental lack of understanding about how to wage an information war has led to the conditions we face now: the rise of ISIS and the return of U.S. forces to Iraq. nbsp;

ldquo;Maybe the best book ever written about lsquo;information war,rsquo; strategies, and tactics.nbsp;An insiderrrsquo;s revealing behind-the-scenes story of the media and the military in Iraq.nbsp;From the White House to West Point to West Main Street, this is a book to ponder about the military and the press in a free society at war.rdquo;mdash;Dan Rather, former anchor ofnbsp;CBS Evening Newsnbsp;and managing editor and anchor ofnbsp;Dan Rather Reports nbsp;