



## The Watchers: The Rise of America's Surveillance State

By Shane Harris

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**The Watchers: The Rise of America's Surveillance State** By Shane Harris

**An explosive look at the domestic agencies charged with spying on all of us**

Given recent terrorist events in the U.S. and the document leaks by NSA whistleblower Edward Snowden, *The Watchers* is more timely than ever, drawing on access to political and operational insiders to create a brilliant exposé of why and how the American government spies on its own citizens. Born in the wake of the 1983 massacre of 241 Marines in Beirut, the domestic surveillance program introduced by Ronald Reagan's national security advisor, John Poindexter, to coordinate intelligence on terrorists has claimed billions of government dollars. Despite the cost, it has failed in its mission to identify new threats. But as Harris shows, it has provided the government with a tool for the electronic surveillance of Americans that has ushered in an age of constitutionally questionable intrusion into the lives of every citizen.

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### Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Harris, a reporter for *National Journal*, details the rise of a band of mavericks in national security and intelligence organizations that has erected an American surveillance state. In this timely and admirably balanced account, Harris focuses on the role of a handful of key figures, including Reagan-era National Security Adviser John Poindexter, as they campaigned for information technology to identify terrorists. The controversial Poindexter started the campaign after the 1983 bombing of Marine barracks in Lebanon; the mission was imbued with greater urgency after September 11; with the support of the Bush administration, the National Security Agency (NSA) acquired a research project that Poindexter had developed called Total Information Awareness that uses advanced data-mining techniques to collect mountains of data—and has trapped countless innocent citizens in the NSA's electronic nets. After the NSA's warrantless surveillance was exposed in 2005, Congress passed largely cosmetic reforms that left the surveillance state intact. Harris carefully examines how the nexus between terrorism and technology has complicated the age-old conflict between security and liberty and calls for a national debate on the issue. This informative and dramatic narrative is an excellent place to start. (*Feb.*)

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From [Booklist](#)

**\*Starred Review\*** In 1983, following a terrorist attack on U.S. Marines in Beirut, John Poindexter, a national security advisor, lamented that better surveillance and analysis could have prevented the attack. That lament resounded again on 9/11 when the “watchers”—information technologists working for the nation’s intelligence and national security services—fretted that ongoing debates about privacy versus national security continued to hamper their incredible capabilities. Between those attacks and even since then, Poindexter has worked tirelessly, in and out of government, with a band of “warrior geeks” to develop a Total Information Awareness system that can track potential terrorists. The problem is that the system also sweeps innocent U.S. citizens into its net, collecting data from phone calls and e-mails. Harris chronicles the rise and fall and revival of Poindexter (made infamous by his involvement in the Iran-Contra scandal) and others, and the inherent contradictions of protecting American liberty by spying on U.S. citizens. He details the electronic tracking systems, the internecine conflicts between spy agencies, the complex of laws and regulations, and the political machinations that have resulted in the secret funding of this controversial operation. Harris sifts through a confusing array of acronyms, fascinating characters, and chilling operations to offer an absorbing look at modern spying technology and how it impacts average Americans. --Vanessa Bush

Review

"An absorbing look at modern spying technology and how it impacts average Americans."

-*Booklist*

"Harris displays an exquisite understanding of the intricacies of his topic and a remarkable sensitivity to the genuine concerns of the watchers and their critics.... A sharply written, wise analysis of the complex mashup of electronic sleuthing, law, policy and culture."

-*Kirkus Reviews*

"*The Watchers* reads like a thriller, and the story is sadly on the mark in describing our limited oversight of the government's surveillance powers. The nation needs to do better, and Harris' book is rich background to

that task."

-Gregory F. Treverton, Director, Center for Global Risk and Security, RAND Corporation

"This is an astonishingly detailed, well-researched narrative. It tells the story of how, over the past two decades, U.S. officials developed the capability to put together massive amounts of information about any individual they choose to watch."

-James Mann, author of *Rise of the Vulcans*

## **Users Review**

### **From reader reviews:**

#### **Lucia Morrone:**

The knowledge that you get from *The Watchers: The Rise of America's Surveillance State* is the more deep you searching the information that hide inside the words the more you get enthusiastic about reading it. It does not mean that this book is hard to be aware of but *The Watchers: The Rise of America's Surveillance State* giving you enjoyment feeling of reading. The author conveys their point in specific way that can be understood through anyone who read the item because the author of this e-book is well-known enough. This book also makes your vocabulary increase well. That makes it easy to understand then can go together with you, both in printed or e-book style are available. We suggest you for having this particular *The Watchers: The Rise of America's Surveillance State* instantly.

#### **Sheldon Downs:**

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#### **Scott Tucker:**

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**Bradford Bryant:**

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