



Smoke and Mirrors: The War on Drugs and the Politics of Failure

Dan Baum

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For sheer government absurdity, the War on Drugs is hard to beat. After three decades of increasingly punitive policies, illicit drugs are more easily available, drug potencies are greater, drug killings are more common, and drug barons are richer than ever. The War on Drugs costs Washington more than the Commerce, Interior, and State departments combined - and it's the one budget item whose growth is never questioned. A strangled court system, exploding prisons, and wasted lives push the cost beyond measure. What began as a flourish of campaign rhetoric in 1968 has grown into a monster. And while nobody claims that the War on Drugs is a success, nobody suggests an alternative. Because to do so, as Surgeon General Joycelyn Elders learned, is political suicide. Dan Baum interviewed more than 175 people - from John Ehrlichman to Janet Reno - to tell the story of how Drug War fever has been escalated; who has benefited along the way; and how the mounting price in dollars, lives, and liberties has been willfully ignored. Smoke and Mirrors takes you right into the offices where each new stage was planned and executed, then takes you to the streets where policies have produced bloody warfare. This is a tale of the nation run amok - in a way the American people are not yet ready to confront.

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