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Inside the Wire: A Military Intelligence Soldier's Eyewitness Account of Life at Guantánamo

Erik Saar, Viveca Novak

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Inside the Wire is a gripping portrait of one soldier's six months at the terrorist detention center at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba - a powerful, searing journey into a surreal world completely unique in the American experience.

In an explosive newsbreak that generated headlines all around the world, a document submitted by army Sergeant Erik Saar to the Pentagon for clearance was leaked to the Associated Press in January, 2005. His account of appalling sexual interrogation tactics used on detainees at Guantanamo Bay was shocking, but that was only one small part of the story of what he saw at Guantanamo -- and the leak was only one more strange twist in his profoundly disturbing and life-changing trip behind the scenes of America's war on terror.

Saar couldn't have been more eager to get to Gitmo. After two years in the army learning Arabic, becoming a military intelligence linguist, he pounced on the chance to apply his new skills to extracting crucial intel from the terrorists. But when he walked through the heavily guarded, double-locked and double-gated fence line surrounding Camp Delta -- the special facility built for the "worst of the worst" al Qaeda and Taliban suspects - he entered a bizarre world that defied everything he'd expected, belied a great deal of what the Pentagon has claimed, and defiled the most cherished values of American life.

In this powerful account, he takes us inside the cell blocks and interrogation rooms, face-to-face with the captives. Suicide attempts abound. Storm-trooper-like IRF (initial reaction forces) teams ramp up for beatings of the captives, and even injure one American soldier so badly in a mock drill -- a training exercise - that he ends up with brain seizures. Fake interrogations are staged when General Geoffrey Miller - whose later role in the Abu Ghraib fiasco would raise so many questions - hosts visiting VIPs. Barely trained interrogators begin applying their "creativity" when new, less restrictive rules are issued by Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld.

When Saar takes over as a cosupervisor of the linguists translating for interrogations and gains access to the detainees' intelligence files, he must contend with the extent of the deceptions and the harsh reality of just how illconceived and counterproductive an operation in the war on terror, and in the history of American military engagement, the Guantanamo detention center is.

Inside the Wire is one of those rare and unforgettable eyewitness accounts of a momentous and deeply sobering chapter in American history, and a powerful cautionary tale about the risks of defaming the very values we are fighting for as we wage the war on terror.

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