



The Network

Jason Elliot

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In this bold novel, Jason Elliot illuminates the dark recesses of the intelligence community during a crucial moment in history: the struggle to avoid a terrorist attack.

In the months before 9/11, former army officer Anthony Taverner is leading a quiet life in the English countryside. But his recruitment for a dangerous mission to Afghanistan by the British Secret Intelligence Service—better known as MI6—shatters his fragile peace and plunges him into the kaleidoscopic world of spying. Under the expert guidance of an old-school hero and veteran of the elite British Special Air Service, Taverner prepares to enter Taliban-controlled Afghanistan to destroy a cache of the CIA's precious Stinger missiles before they can fall into the hands of al-Qaeda. In Britain and America, the intelligence community is poised for a catastrophe that must be kept secret from the public, one that Taverner must attempt to avert—all without exposing a dangerous secret all his own.

Based on real characters and drawing on the author's extensive firsthand knowledge of Afghanistan, this is a thriller of rare authenticity, providing sustained insight into influences surrounding 9/11 and raising questions about the role of intelligence agencies in historical events deliberately hidden from the public eye.

The Network Details

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Author : Jason Elliot

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From Reader Review The Network for online ebook

Maureen says

This is Jason Elliot's first foray into the realm of writing novels, and he started with a real corker. Elliott first established himself as a travel writer with *An Unexpected Light*, which explored Afghanistan from a totally unique perspective. In *The Network*, he uses that knowledge to great advantage. This is a pre-9/11 thriller, centered around an operation to take out a stockpile of Stinger missiles deep in the wilds of the Afghani countryside. It is loaded with detail about ordnance, weapons, and offensive and defensive training tactics used by the SAS.

It is also pretty clear from reading this book that his marriage did not work out. It is not everyday that an ex meets with this sustained level of vitriol on the printed page. That took away from the rest of the book to me, but not enough to give it three stars instead of four. I once met the lady in question, which may cloud my judgment somewhat.

In the end, this is a good, competently written espionage thriller. In a few places, it could have used a more careful editor and proofreader. All in all, though, the bits that shine more than make up for the awkward places. I look forward to seeing where Jason goes next, whether it be in the travel or fiction arena.

Barbara Mitchell says

This is a novel I won from GoodReads and I'm so happy I did. Elliot is a travel writer which adds a great dimension to this thriller. It's his first novel but I certainly hope there will be more. There are gripping sections of nail-biting tension but those are balanced with wonderful descriptions of the settings and relationships. The hero, Anthony Taverner, has a best friend he would die for, a lovely romance with a beautiful woman, and a brotherhood with another man of action. I prefer that to a loner who only uses people, and I prefer the balance to constant bloody action.

Taverner, aka "Ant," is a hero I would love to see in another novel; he's that intriguing. He's a thoughtful man, controlled, very human rather than a Rambo.

Much of the action takes place in Afghanistan, a place which becomes more haunting the more I read about it. Of course we all need to know more about the country and its people for obvious reasons. I recall that iconic image of a Afghani woman with green eyes who gazes into the camera. That photo alone has always made me want to know more about Afghanistan and this novel is one of the answers because Elliot obviously knows that part of the world quite well. I do recommend this book and not just for people who like thrillers.

Pamela (Lavish Bookshelf) says

With Jason Elliot's first book "An Unexpected Light: Travels in Afghanistan" it is clear Elliot loves the people and culture of Afghanistan. Based on Jason Elliot's second book "The Network" it's also clear that Elliot enjoys writing military covert ops, James Bond-style thrillers. Unfortunately the merging of these two

interests really did not result in a blockbuster read. Actually, at times, the book feels as if it was written by two different people.

The descriptions of Afghanistan are extremely poetic. Here is an example from Page 289:
"Beyond the dust we can see the long chains of peaks to the north and south of the city. It's late spring now and the mountains are draped in ice on their upper ridges, and lower down their snow-filled gulleys resemble the camouflage of a killer whale."

On the other hand, the endless descriptions of guns, battles, military plans and strategies drone on incessantly throughout the book. Here is a one random sample from Page 84:

"Despite sustained fire from the BATT house, the Adoo then breached the perimeter wire, and were close enough to begin throwing grenades into the gun pit. Labalaba, after slamming a final shell in the breech of the gun, fell to an Adoo bullet."

Predictably, the book also contains the ubiquitous "spy guy love affair with the forbidden woman." As I read this book, I had two main thoughts. First, it struck me that this book might be a great entry into a reading genre that I would call "Summer Beach Reading for Men." It's a quick read that's sure to entertain a vacationer looking for some masculine reading. And secondly, this book will probably be coming soon to a theater near you. It's filled with all of the elements Hollywood loves and should make an interesting movie. I received this book complimentary from Library Thing as part of their Early Reviewers program, but the opinion is all mine.

Jacki (Julia Flyte) says

The eyecatching cover of this book bears absolutely no resemblance to the story. The narrator, Anthony Taverner, is a former Army officer living in the English countryside, who is recruited to find and destroy a cache US Stinger missiles in remote Afghanistan in the months leading up to 9/11. He also has a secondary, private mission of tracking down his best friend who has been living undercover with Al-Qaeda. Before he can travel to Afghanistan, he is given extensive training. He also travels to the Sudan to retrieve information about Al-Qaeda. Finally the action shifts to Afghanistan itself and the execution of the mission.

The book starts with a bang, but then spends considerable time filling in Taverner's back story before it moves forward again. The diversion to the Sudan feels unnecessary, as does a romantic sub-plot that felt forced and which gets abandoned abruptly. The final third of the book is set in Afghanistan, and it's at this point that the book really finds its feet and grips you through to the terrific ending.

If you're looking for a fast paced thriller, the kind where you disengage your mind and turn the pages at a rapid rate, this probably isn't the book for you. If on the other hand you value authentic detail and realism, you are more likely to enjoy this story. The details about the narrator's background and training feel realistic and the superb descriptions of Afghanistan in the second half of the book reflect the author's familiarity with his topic.

When I was halfway through the book I felt like I could take or leave it, but by the end I realised that I really enjoyed it.

John C. says

The story basically involves Afghanistan, Terrorists and British Intelligence within the rising global tensions a few months prior to the 911 disaster.

Most reviews, and the novel jacket itself, seem to lead off with this titillating door crasher. After finishing the book however I failed to discover anything tangible pertaining to the 911 incident whatsoever! I felt a bit cheated in this respect.

What was a little interesting were the author's rendition of the training and execution of what goes into real spy work. He puts it somewhere in between the campy glitter of James Bond and the realistic amphitheaters of John La Carre's work as in 'The Spy who came in from the Cold'.

Arguably Ian Fleming and John LaCarre being the masters in these genres, this novel does bring a feel for this time and place in war torn Afghanistan. This is what kept me mildly interested, not so much the spy stuff.

'The Network' still comes off a decent effort, although really nothing much more than you would expect out of a dime store paperback. His other bodies of work are non-fiction in nature involving Religion and other Middle Eastern interests. Perhaps he should stick to that?

By John Archibald, November 2012

AH says

I won this book in a Goodreads First Reads Giveaway.

What is the Network? -- p. 130:

"The Network's original goal was to establish a structure, to be activated in times of need, to penetrate key groups relevant to British interests in the Middle East and gather information on their activities. It operated independently of the more conventional intelligence services, with which its relationship was collaborative when necessary, but for the sake of secrecy never shared operational details."

The Network by Jason Elliot is an awesome book! It is a must-read for anyone interested in Middle Eastern politics, the intelligence community, or if you are an avid conspiracy theorist. The author mixes in real life events and characters with his own story to make a compelling read.

The Network follows the career of Anthony Taverne a former British army officer. Anthony or Ant is recruited for a special mission in Afghanistan to destroy a large cache of Stinger missiles. The year is 2001, a few months before the events of September 11. But nothing is as it seems.

I loved the entire book. The first two chapters reminded me of a James Bond movie. There is a great chase scene through the English countryside. Our hero is kidnapped, tied up, and beaten to assess his worthiness for the mission. Ant is then assigned a training partner, and his name is "H". How absolutely British spy like!

The author makes insightful observations of how the intelligence community operates. Where there is a mission to destroy missiles, there also seems to be a secondary mission involved that is not compatible with the first. Confused? Welcome to the world of deniable operations.

Jason Elliot's descriptions of Afghanistan made me feel like I was there. The lack of roads, government, and infrastructure made me think of just how wild and untamed this part of the world is. Yet, the author also makes the country beautiful with his descriptions of the mountains. He is also very respectful of the population, portraying them very favorably.

I really loved Anthony's character. I found him to be pragmatic, dedicated, and generally likable. Anthony did not take decisions lightly, and one of the things that I enjoyed about this book was the thought processes he used in order to agree to join the mission. I loved that he was portrayed as a human being, with an "evil" ex-wife and two beautiful daughters living far away in Washington. Anthony also found a love interest in Jameela, his contact in the Sudan.

Probably one of my favorite scenes in the book was where Anthony had to make a hasty departure from the Sudan. He called his American "cowgirl" friend to help a British agent escape from Sudan with Canadian papers. Truly a global effort!

The only thing that I felt was missing from this book was a map of Afghanistan to highlight Anthony's route. It would have been helpful just to get an idea of the distances traveled.

I feel that I have learned a lot from this novel. What a phenomenal first novel for Jason Elliot. I hope he keeps on writing!

Joanne says

I don't like war. I admire and owe every freedom I have to those who have fought for my protection and yours. This book humanizes war by showing the personalities and homeland of those we seek to destroy. Yet it is not only our enemy that suffers. This novel not only humanizes the conflicts, it takes you to the worlds in which we fight. Everyday people making a living. Beautiful scenery, some scarred by war. Past conflicts explained, and etched in memory. Death, betrayal, and heroism - more than just the main characters, but those who help just to keep their peaceful way of life.

If I hadn't won this book on Goodreads, I probably wouldn't have read it. But I am glad I did. I learned about Sudan and the struggles of Africa - beyond starving children. I also learned that Afghans are a very pleasant people who did not welcome a Soviet invasion, an American betrayal, and that they now caught in the middle of politics gone wrong.

Nothing is black and white. The Network brings humans into this conflict. I am fortunate enough not to have a love on in this conflict, but this book made me feel the emotion and turmoil of most parties involved. It does not try to paint the enemy as human, but it does question who the enemy is and who has painted them into that corner. Yes, enemies exist. But war makes enemies out of all of us, right or wrong.

Joseph Gendron says

This book offers, thru a novel, a detailed look at the absurdly complex espionage warfare that is ongoing in and around conflict zones. My interest was geographical and Elliot excelled at this topic in his previous

books on Iran and Afghanistan. This time, he provides more glimpses into the Afghanistan scene of incredible natural beauty and small villages as well as the "war farts" of destruction scattered about in the settlements where larger numbers of people aggregate. He describes the Afghan character acutely so the reader really gets a sense of the people's place in this landscape and an admiration of their qualities. An added bonus for me was the part of the novel set in Sudan, the third latest country in Africa. This is another exotic place (pyramids!) that I realize I won't be traveling to soon, so to go there through Elliot's descriptions was appreciated.

Carol says

I really enjoyed Jason Elliott's The Network. It was like going along for the ride on covert mission from the safety of your armchair. The mission was to seek out a stash of American stinger missiles before the Al Queda gets them.

I confess that I have never really enjoyed James Bond movies with the exception of the introduction of new gadgets and liking the scenery of the different settings. This book is much richer! Anthony or "Ant" is much more developed as a person; from the sorrow he felt being separated from his two little girls to his sincere desire to be the best for the Firm.

With this book, you feel that a door to the British Intelligence and CIA has been opened. There is humor as The Network does some mocking of spy films. Even though I have never held a gun in hands, I enjoyed learning about the origin, capabilities and deficits of the AK-47. I trained census workers for the 1990 census and knew a census taker who had the experience of sitting across from someone with an AK-47 at their side. I now have a deeper appreciation of his terror as he went over the questionnaire with the resident.

Also, the book makes you familiar with the deadly stinger missiles in such a way that even I with no useful background in arms could understand it. Even so, I did not feel that this education was a dumbing down but rather a correct and realistic simplification for the inexperienced.

Besides learning all about the different methods of defense, the Ant showed versatility in quite a few different languages. Anthony had a great advantage knowing a lot of the languages in the area and also the customs. He knew how appreciate cultural differences and fit in.

Ant demonstrated lots of ingenuity in how to get out a variety of life threatening situations. The focus was to do what works and that did not necessarily require feats of magic.

I would recommend this book to anyone interested in Afghanistan, covert operations, adventure and wanting a more accuracy of them. This is not a man's book; it is a book for everyone.

Katherine says

I liked the descriptions of Afganistan.

Marsha Nelson says

I truly enjoyed reading this book.

The story is the making of a covert operative and his assignments leading to a final explosive operation. It takes place before 9/11 and includes a great deal of history on the English secret and covert services as well

as those of the U.S. The Network conveys the history of the conflicts in Afghanistan and Sudan as they lead to the rise of the Taliban and Osama bin Laden and al Qaeda. The history and peoples of Afghanistan come alive when he returns with "H" to complete one last job as well as find an old friend. Anthony's love affair with Jameela in Sudan includes a good history, background and vivid visuals of the country. The characters in The Network come alive as "H" and Anthony train to accomplish the impossible with few resources but all their expertise and cunning.

I recommend the book and hope to see more of this caliber from the author.

Gordon Johnston says

Billed as a spy novel set immediately pre 9/11, but it just doesn't live up to the hype. A rather elongated plot, based around a disjointed timeline and with large amounts of exposition, together with masses of background on the history of Afghanistan, make this a slow read.

The narrative develops over a long period as a former British army officer is recruited and trained to destroy a bunch of US missiles in the possession of the Taliban in Afghanistan. Lots of talk of Osama, CIA, MI6 and the shadowy Network, but ultimately little of the context is resolved leaving an average adventure story.

Amanda says

I loved the way the mission was revealed in layers in this book. He was training, then he was tortured, then the torture was a set-up by the guy training him; he has a job with MI6, but his real purpose is to bring Manny home; he was in training to be a spy, but he is a trainer for the Network... The story keeps getting deeper and more complex.

The book is filled with amazing descriptions, I guess showing the author's history as a travel writer.

The tense is weird--it is current tense all the way through except at the very beginning of new sections in the past (He *did this*, and he *is doing*).

The author uses new--to me--terms and nicknames--the CIA is the Manson family, car bombs can ave tilt switches, one man in the Taliban is a Talib. I like the use of ultraviolet ink, but how would it work on a doorknob? Wouldn't you have to move it yourself going out and then in?

The story is fun and the characters are interesting, and because it is supposed to be based on real people, it is also depressing and frustrating, because why did they go through all that for nothing? They should have been able to change things.

I won this book on First-Reads.

Steve says

I won this book in a first reads giveaway. The story describes the experiences of Anthony Taverner, a fictitious MI6 agent tasked with destroying a cache of American Stinger missiles in Afghanistan before they

fall into the hands of terrorists who would use them against the U.S. and its allies. The setting is just prior to 9/11/2001.

Like the life of a secret agent, parts of this story are fast-paced and full of action and others are more relaxed and mundane. Elliot has done a wonderful job of portraying in detail the life of a secret agent from a seemingly real perspective.

The story wasn't as captivating as I had hoped, which is why I gave it four stars instead of five. I was expecting more-edge-of-your-seat kind of action, and there was certainly some of that, but it wasn't present throughout.

All things considered, this was quite an enjoyable book. The subject matter was very interesting, but not quite engrossing. The writing was mature and flowing, and the detail was quite believable. Read it if you like war/spy-type stories.

Billjr13 says

I can highly recommend Jason Elliot's new novel The Network. He has created a richly detailed novel based in reality that is truly compelling to read. It is a spy thriller that speaks with vivid description and distinctive authenticity of someone who has lived there. It really has it all, seemingly authentic tradecraft, espionage, deceit, betrayals, religion, international affairs, exploitation, romance and friendships, all tested to the very limit. The Network is well written with a complex plot, plenty of suspense, wonderful depiction of locations and even a little romance.

On the eve of 9/11, Former army officer and Gulf War veteran Captain Anthony Taverner is living a quiet life in the English countryside. But his intimate knowledge of Afghanistan and his knowledge of explosives haven't gone unnoticed. Taverner is recruited by the Secret Intelligence Service for a mission in Afghanistan: to infiltrate a fort in Taliban-held territory and destroy a cache of the CIA's stinger missiles before they fall into the hands of Al Qaeda. Soon he finds himself moving into secret worlds; from the tunnel complex beneath SIS HQ in London's Vauxhall Cross, to the CIA's bin Laden tracking station at Langley. At first, it seems like a straightforward mission. But Taverner has a secret past of his own which he must conceal from even his closest allies.

H, a former SAS man and security expert, is methodical, focused and supremely fit, and spends months training "Ant" in a range of 'useful' and potentially deadly skills. He will also accompany Taverner on the Op. They will destroy the fort together. But just what is the Network? What does the Baroness know about their mission? And how will all this affect history, and change the political landscape forever? As the dangerous trail leads from the pirate-haunted coast of Sudan and the company of beautiful Jameela, bin Laden's sister-in-law, to the war-torn streets of Kabul, Taverner is forced to confront the fears that belong to his most secret past.
