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Researching National Security and Intelligence Policy (Book Review)

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Researching National Security and Intelligence Policy. Bert Chapman. Washington, D.C.: CQ Press, 2004. xxiii, 452 pp. $125 USD (cloth). ISBN 1-56802-855-5.

Information seekers can encounter many challenges when researching national security and intelligence subject matter. Information, even if unclassified and available to the public, can often prove to be as elusive as a good covert intelligence agent. Bert Chapman has provided a comprehensive resource that serves well as both a ready reference tool and, most importantly, as a guide to those embarking on substantive research in this complex subject area.

This single volume work explores the myriad of print and electronic resources which can provide researchers with insight into the formulation of national security and intelligence policy. Resources include a vast number of publicly-accessible publications of the U. S. Government and its departments and agencies, works of independent research institutions and think tanks, and publications of commissions and other advisory organizations, amongst others. With a global scope, the coverage also includes English language publications from a variety of international organizations, as well as from several foreign English-speaking countries. Selected scholarly journals and monographic series, as well as indexes and other research tools are also discussed.

Agencies of the federal government and their publications are a major focus; chapter titles include: Executive Branch Agencies—Department of Defense, Other Executive Branch Agencies, Military Agencies, Independent Agencies, Intelligence Agencies, Congress and Congressional Support Agencies, etc. In addition, a chapter on legal and regulatory resources includes a short, but effective introduction to federal legal materials and a section on military law. Chapter notes are extensive and informative.

Discussions typically include a basic overview of an agency or organization consisting of background and historical information, the agency's website address (if it has one), as well as commentary as to the agency's role in the national security/intelligence arena. Particularly noteworthy is the inclusion of the availability of media files, online library catalogs, and digitized collections at agency websites.

Significant attention is given to publications and their availability. This includes the types of materials generally available from an agency or organization, i.e.: news releases, organization charts, fact sheets, reports and other documents, etc. Titles of recent and significant documents are provided. Where appropriate, mention is made that publications are available on other agency or library websites, or through commercial vendors, and/or through depository libraries of the FDLP (Federal Depository Library Program) or the Government Printing Office's GPO Access website.

Important topic areas are featured in special text boxes or sidebars scattered throughout the work. These offer concise treatments of such subjects as the Department of Defense, the Freedom of Information Act, the Department of Homeland Security, the USA PATRIOT Act, National Intelligence Estimates, the President's Daily Brief, the Posse Comitatus Act, and Congressional Oversight of National Security, among other current popular topics. Also included are summaries of various library classification systems, including the Superintendent of Documents

Classification system, the Dewey Decimal and Library of Congress Classification Systems, and Library of Congress Subject Headings.

An extensive table of contents and a comprehensive index provide multiple access points to agencies, publications, and other subjects. Other helpful tools include a list of authors cited in the text and a glossary of acronyms so ubiquitous in this field.

The multiple access points, topical sidebar features, and the concise treatment of agencies and publications make this resource of interest as a ready reference tool to quickly identify a particular agency or organization, its key publications, and the availability of material in libraries and on the Web. More in-depth researchers will appreciate the comprehensive nature of this resource, the analysis of the agency or organization and its publications, the extensive chapter notes providing informative references, and the guiding steps to finding important documents and other relevant material. This is a highly recommended resource.

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