



Preventing Surprise Attacks: Intelligence Reform in the Wake of 9/11 (Hoover Studies in Politics, Economics, and Society)

Richard A. Posner

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The commission to investigate the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks on the United States issued its final report in July of 2004, in which it recommended a dramatic overhaul of the nation's intelligence system. Congress responded by hastily enacting the Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act of 2004, which adopts many of the 9/11 commission's specific recommendations, though with a number of alterations. Richard A. Posner, in the first full-length study of the post-9/11 movement for intelligence reform, argues that the 9/11 commission's analysis, on which Congress relied, was superficial and its organizational proposals unsound. The commission, followed by Congress, exaggerated the benefits of centralizing control over intelligence; neglected the relevant scholarship dealing with surprise attacks, organization theory, the principles of intelligence, and the experience of foreign nations, some of which have a longer history of fighting terrorism than the United States; and as a result ignored the psychological, economic, historical, sociological, and comparative dimensions of the issue of intelligence reform.

Posner explains, however, that a ray of hope remains: the reorganization provisions of the new Act are so vague, as a result of intense politicking, that the actual shape of the reorganized system will depend critically on decisions made by the President in implementing the Act. In a searing critique, Posner exposes the pitfalls created by the new legislation, identifies the issues overlooked by the 9/11 commission and Congress, and suggests directions for real reform.

This book is published in cooperation with the Hoover Institution

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