Annotated bibliography of books on 9/11 and related topics.

Allawi, Ali. ***The Occupation of Iraq: Winning the War and Losing the Peace.***

From Publishers Weekly
Allawi, until recently a senior minister in the Iraqi government, provides an insider's account of the nascent Iraqi government following the American invasion. His scholarly yet immensely readable exposition of Iraqi society and politics will likely become the standard reference on post-9/11 Iraq. It convincingly blasts the Coalition Provisional Authority for failing to understand the simmering sectarian animosity and conflicting loyalties that led Iraq into chaos. Beginning during Saddam's reign, among the motley gang of liberal democrats, Islamists and Kurdish nationalists that formed the opposition-in-exile, of which Allawi was a prominent member, he chronicles the fortunes and aspirations of the political parties, personalities and interest groups that now are tearing Iraq apart. In one representative episode, after the siege of Fallujah in 2004, the Marines initiated an ill-fated attempt to create a Fallujah Brigade of local men who would be loyal to the CPA. "[Head of the CPA L. Paul] Bremer... learned about it from newspaper reports.... The defense minister [Allawi himself] went on television, denouncing the Fallujah Brigade.... The 'Fallujah Brigade,' after a few weeks of apparent cooperation with the Marines, began to act as the core of a national liberation army. Any pretense that they were rooting out insurgents was dropped." (Apr. 9)

Bellaigue, Christopher De. ***In the Rose Garden of the Martyrs: A Memoir of Iran.***

From Publishers Weekly
This portrait of the Islamist revolution's heartland is far from the "axis of evil" caricature so often associated with the regime that held Americans hostage in 1979–1980 and is actively pursuing nuclear arms today. Rather, Ballaigue, who covers Iran for the Economist, presents a textured view of a complex society, struggling with an ancient culture, a radical ideology and a Westernized elite. Drawing inspiration from George Orwell, who chronicled the Catalonian revolution of the 1930s and its betrayal by Stalinists, Ballaiguecharts the Islamist revolution from its origins in the repressive regime of the Shah and the fiery sermons of the Ayatollah Khomeini, through its triumph and the taking of the hostages of the "Great Satan," the war with Saddam Hussein's Iraq, the Iran-Contra scandal and the waning of the Islamist revolutionary fervor as educated Iranians became disillusioned with the mullahs and thirsted for greater cultural and intellectual freedom. The book is peppered with interviews with and vignettes of the many Iranians the author has met during his years in Iran; the title refers to a cemetery in Tehran where the martyrs of the Iran-Iraq war are interred—"rose garden" being an ironic rendition of rows of headstones.

Clark, Richard. ***Against All Enemies.***

From Publishers Weekly
From the first thrilling chapter, which takes readers into the White House center of operations on September 11, through his final negative assessment of George W. Bush's post-9/11 war on terror, Clarke, the U.S.'s former terrorism czar, offers a complex and illuminating look into the

successes and failures of the nation's security apparatus. He offers charged (and, one must note, for himself triumphant) insider scenes, such as when he scared the devil out of Clinton's Cabinet to motivate them to fight terrorism. The media has understandably focused on Clarke's charge that Bush neglected terrorism before the attacks on New York and Washington; but Clarke also offers a longer perspective on the issue, going back to the first Gulf War (when he was an assistant secretary of state) and makes some stunning revelations. One of the latter is that the U.S. came close to war with Iran over that country's role in the terrorist bombing of the Khobar Towers in Saudi Arabia in 1996. An important aspect of Clarke's book is that it is only one man's account—and an account moreover that casts its author as hero and others (FBI, CIA, the military) as screw-ups; as has been seen in recent congressional hearings, administration officials (notably, Condoleezza Rice) have challenged its veracity. But those inclined to believe Clarke will find that he makes a devastating case about the Bush administration's failure from the beginning (when Clarke's position was downgraded and he was taken off the top-level Principals Committee) to make terrorism as high a priority as Clinton's did. In the face of the Bush team's claim that they didn't know about a threat to the homeland, readers will be haunted by two small words: after mobilizing to confront the Millennium terror threat, Clarke reached what seemed to him the obvious conclusion regarding al-Qaeda: "They're here."

Gordon, Michael, and Trainor, Bernard. ***Cobra II.***

From The Washington Post's Book World
Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice made headlines last week by conceding that the Bush administration had made "tactical errors, thousands" in waging the war in Iraq. But, she argued, the administration pursued the right underlying strategy in toppling Saddam Hussein, and history's judgment will be based on whether "you make the right strategic decisions."

In their "inside story" of the war, Michael R. Gordon and Gen. Bernard E. Trainor stand Rice's assertion on its head. They show that the U.S. military's tactical brilliance during the war's early stages came despite the strategic miscalculations of senior civilian and military leaders -- and that the Bush team's misjudgments made the current situation in Iraq far worse than it need have been. As it turns out, in addition to the war with Iraq's tyrant, there was an ongoing war between U.S. field commanders, their own senior commander (Gen. Tommy Franks, the head of Central Command) and civilian leaders in Washington.

The Bush administration's two major strategic miscalculations are by now familiar: first, a broad-based intelligence failure regarding Iraq's weapons of mass destruction, the viability of its economic infrastructure and the reception Iraqis would give invading U.S. forces; and second, underestimating the challenge of stabilizing post-invasion Iraq. Gordon and Trainor -- respectively a New York Times reporter and a retired Marine Corps lieutenant general, and collectively the authors of a widely hailed 1995 book on Operation Desert Storm, The Generals' War -- go beyond these issues to focus on logical flaws in prewar planning that should have raised eyebrows among senior U.S. officials. For example, they report that when the CIA identified nearly 950 suspected WMD sites, military planners argued for additional troops to secure them lest the terrorists purportedly in league with Saddam Hussein spirit the WMD away during the chaos of war, thereby producing the very outcome the administration was trying to

avoid. But Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld was determined to attack with a "lean force."

The book's core, however, centers not on Beltway deliberations but on the dash to Baghdad by the Army and the Marines.The authors do a fine job making one of the most lop-sided campaigns in memory interesting, but the surprises that the Americans encounter turn out to be even more compelling. Senior U.S. field commanders soon realize that their principal enemy is not the Iraqi army but irregular forces -- many of them foreigners -- employing guerrilla tactics. These are portents of the full-blown insurgency to come, but no one back in Washington proves capable of connecting the dots.

While U.S. soldiers and Marines shifted their focus on the fly, the Bush administration failed to recast its strategy for the postwar endgame. Consequently, once American forces seized Baghdad, U.S. troop deployments were curtailed and units were instructed to prepare for a rapid drawdown -- even while the Iraqi police and military forces that the administration expected to preserve order were being disbanded.

While Gordon and Trainor recount the misjudgments of many senior civilian and military leaders, Gen. Franks fares the worst. Many of his statements defy explanation, including his mystifying declaration that "I am not gratified by enough forces on the ground" and his fondness for terms like "functional componency" and "strategic exposure." The general's battlefield guidance is often, well, general; he tells his commanders to take "action on all fronts," which, as the authors note, is "no better than issuing no guidance at all." The authors conclude, scathingly, that Franks "never acknowledged the enemy he faced nor did he comprehend the nature of the war he was directing."

The senior military leadership in Washington comes off little better; they are depicted as a bunch of empty suits. Then chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Gen. Richard B. Myers, is portrayed as a reflexive team player incapable of expressing an independent view. The Army chief of staff at the time, Gen. Eric Shinseki, warned before the war that projected U.S. troop levels were too low to stabilize Iraq, but the authors report that he failed to press home his case once his views were dismissed by senior civilian leaders around Rumsfeld and his then-deputy, Paul Wolfowitz.

Unfortunately, the focus of Cobra II (which takes its title from the Army name for the drive to Baghdad) is limited by Gordon's experiences as a reporter embedded at the U.S.-dominated coalition's land command during the invasion. The book thus emphasizes ground combat; the "shock and awe" air campaign, for example, receives far less attention than it deserves. Moreover, while the book's subtitle claims to cover the occupation of Iraq, the narrative essentially ends in the summer of 2003. Finally, key policymakers such as Vice President Cheney and Rumsfeld declined the authors' requests for interviews; Franks offered only an hour. Thus the views of those at the center of the war were often not captured. Still, Cobra II stands as the best account of the war to date.

Toward the end of the book, some Marines fighting to capture Baghdad come upon a group of Iraqis outside a walled compound who keep waving their hands at knee level. Initially confused, the Marines break into the compound to find that the Iraqis had been trying to signal that it

housed children: more than 100 of them, dirty, bruised and malnourished, apparently imprisoned by the regime for their families' supposed disloyalty. The episode comes as a chilling reminder of the horrors of Baathist rule. When Rice speaks of the "strategic" decision to depose Saddam Hussein and his barbaric regime, she is referring to a laudable goal, not a strategy. The war is not over, and good strategy is still very much needed. Cobra II offers an instructive lesson on the consequences of inadequate strategic planning. If its message is heeded, Americans may yet look back on this conflict and recall the words of Georges Clemenceau, France's leader during World War I: "War is a series of catastrophes that results in a victory." Reviewed by Andrew F. Krepinevich.

Hersh, Seymour. ***Chain of Command: The Road from 9/11 to Abu Ghraib.***

From Publishers Weekly
Based on previously published articles and supplemented by fresh revelations, this book by Pulitzer Prize-winning investigative reporter Hersh, who writes for The New Yorker and has authored several books (The Dark Side of Camelot, etc.), charges the Bush administration with being propelled by ideology and hamstrung by incompetence in Iraq, Afghanistan and other areas. One former intelligence official observes that the Bush administration staffers behaved "as if they were on a mission from God," while another laments, "The guys at the top are as ignorant as they could be." It's no surprise, then, that the dissenters want to talk or that the Hersh, who has a reputation for integrity and enviable inside access, ferrets them out, assembling critiques from diverse, mostly unidentified sources at home and abroad. According to Hersh, the dire conditions that "enemy combatants" suffered at Guantánamo Bay, Cuba, presaged detainee abuses at Baghdad's Abu Ghraib prison. Hersh reveals the depravities purportedly occurring at Guantánamo and argues that Donald Rumsfeld wasn't the only one responsible for what happened at Abu Ghraib: "the President and Vice President had been in it, and with him, all the way." The book also covers some familiar ground, exploring pre-9/11 intelligence oversights and the administration's misconception that Saudi Arabia, Syria, Iran, Israel, Turkey and the Kurds would jump on the democracy bandwagon after the invasion of Iraq. But Hersh reserves his sharpest words for President Bush, suggesting the "terrifying possibility" that "words have no meaning for this President beyond the immediate moment, and so he believes that his mere utterance of the phrases makes them real." Hersh's critics may dismiss these explosive, less than objective conclusions. For others, however, this sobering book is the closest anyone without a security clearance will get to operatives in the inner sanctums of America's intelligence, military, political and diplomatic worlds.

Mann, Jim. ***The Rise of the Vulcans: The History of Bush's War Cabinet.***

From Publishers Weekly
Mann, a former correspondent for the Los Angeles Times, offers a lucid, nonpolemical and carefully researched history of President Bush's foreign policy team, the self-described "Vulcans" (after the Roman god of fire). In doing so, Mann illuminates the administration's rationale for the Iraqi war with impressive clarity. For the Vulcans, he shows, the war is not an anomalous foreign adventure or a knee-jerk reaction to 9/11. On the contrary, the foreign policy, devised by Vice-President Dick Cheney, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, Assistant Secretary of

Defense Paul Wolfowitz, Secretary of State Colin Powell, Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage and National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice, was 35 years in the making and has its roots in the Republican Party faction that opposed detente with the Soviet Union. Vulcan philosophy has three major tenets: the embrace of pre-emptive action, the notion of an "unchallengeable American superpower" and the systematic export of America's democratic values. Implicit is the rejection of both the notion that transatlantic relationships are the natural focus of U.S. foreign policy and the Kissingeresque realpolitik that dominated much of 20th-century policy. Mann's purpose is to explicate Bush's foreign policy, not to make sweeping value judgments about its wisdom; he takes care to expose not only errors in the Vulcans' assumptions about the war in Iraq but also those of the war's opponents. This well-written, serious, evenhanded effort should be essential reading for anyone interested in American foreign policy.

National Commission on Terrorist Attacks. ***The 9/11 Commission Report.***

From Publishers Weekly
With a grave resolve that perfectly balances the enormous stakes with the necessity of delving into minutiae, this historic book describes the mechanics of the horrific attacks on the United States and recommends measures for preventing further strikes. Without trivializing any of the events or diminishing the people involved, it reads like a Shakespearean drama. The authors, with grim but charged dispassion, unspool paragraph after paragraph dramatizing the arrival of "muscle hijackers" (as opposed to pilots), the thinking of CIA director George Tenet (regularly referred to, along with most other players here, simply by last name) and plot co-coordinator Khalid Sheikh Mohammad ("KSM") among thousands of others, and the other ways and means by which a "foreign" incursion caused catastrophic domestic damage. Distilling an enormous amount of information in plain language, with unerring pitch and a perfect feel for when to gloss ("Dubai, a modern city with easy access to a major airport..."), the book's implied narrator sticks as close as possible to how real people made real decisions, and, when stymied in considering a factor or set of factors, is willing to say so. In so doing, this multi-author document produces an absolutely compelling narrative intelligence, one with clarity, a sense of shared mission and an overriding desire to do something about the situation. At the same time, with quotational chapter headings like " 'We Have Some Planes' " and " 'The System Was Blinking Red,' " the authors never forget that they are communicating in a medium that has a lot of stylistic resources for holding one's attention; they draw liberally on the most tried and true. Given what hangs in the balance, it is not a stretch to compare this document to The Federalist Papers, in the sense that the book is designed to foster the debate by which the country will reimagine itself through its bureaucracy.

Packer, George. ***The Assassins' Gate: America in Iraq.***

From Publishers Weekly
Reviewed by Christopher Hitchens. It is extremely uncommon for any reporter to read another's work and to find that he altogether recognizes the scene being described. Reading George Packer's book, I found not only that I was remembering things I had forgotten, but also that I was finding things that I ought to have noticed myself. His book rests on three main pillars: analysis

of the intellectual origins of the Iraq war, summary of the political argument that preceded and then led to it, and firsthand description of the consequences on the ground. In each capacity, Packer shows himself once more to be the best chronicler, apart perhaps from John Burns of the New York Times, that the conflict has produced. (I say "once more" because some of this material has already appeared in the New Yorker.) A very strong opening section traces the ideas, and the ideologists, of the push for regime change in Iraq. Packer is evidently not a neoconservative, but he provides an admirably fair and lucid account of those who are. There is one extraordinary lacuna in his tale—he manages to summarize the long debate between the "realists" and the "neocons" without mentioning Henry Kissinger—but otherwise he makes an impressively intelligent guide. Of value in itself is the ribbon-like presence, through the narrative, of the impressive exile Iraqi dissident Kanan Makiya, upon whom Packer hones many of his own ideas. (I should confess that I myself make an appearance at this stage and, to my frustration, can find nothing to quarrel with.)The argument within the administration was not quite so intellectual, but Packer takes us through it with insight and verve, giving an excellent account in particular of the way in which Vice President Cheney swung from the "realist" to the "neocon" side. And then the scene shifts to Iraq itself. Packer has a genuine instinct for what the Iraqi people have endured and are enduring, and writes with admirable empathy. His own opinions are neither suppressed nor intrusive: he clearly welcomes the end of Saddam while having serious doubts about the wisdom of the war, and he continually tests himself against experience. The surreal atmosphere of Paul Bremer's brief period of palace rule is very well caught, but the outstanding chapter recounts a visit to the northern city of Kirkuk and literally "walks" us through the mesh of tribal, ethnic and religious rivalry. The Iraq debate has long needed someone who is both tough-minded enough, and sufficiently sensitive, to register all its complexities. In George Packer's work, this need is answered. (Oct. 15)

Ricks, Thomas. *Fiasco.*

From Publishers Weekly
The main points of this hard-hitting indictment of the Iraq war have been made before, but seldom with such compelling specificity. In dovetailing critiques of the civilian and military leadership, Washington Post Pentagon correspondent Ricks (Making the Corps) contends that, under Rumsfeld, Wolfowitz and Feith, the Pentagon concocted "the worst war plan in American history," with insufficient troops and no thought for the invasion's aftermath. Thus, an under-manned, unprepared U.S. military stood by as chaos and insurgency took root, then responded with heavy-handed tactics that brutalized and alienated Iraqis. Based on extensive interviews with American soldiers and officers as well as first-hand reportage, Ricks's detailed, unsparing account of the occupation paints a woeful panorama of reckless firepower, mass arrests, humiliating home invasions, hostage-taking and abuse of detainees. It holds individual commanders to account, from top generals Tommy Franks and Ricardo Sanchez on down. The author's conviction that a proper hearts-and-minds counter-insurgency strategy might have salvaged the debacle is perhaps naive, and pays too little heed to the intractable ethnic conflicts underlying what is by now a full-blown civil war. Still, Ricks's solid reporting, deep knowledge of the American military and willingness to name names make this perhaps the most complete, incisive analysis yet of the Iraq quagmire.

Rieckhoff, Paul. ***Chasing Ghosts: Failures and Facades in Iraq: A Soldier's Perspective.***

From Publishers Weekly
An Operation Iraqi Freedom vet and founder of Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America (IAVA), Rieckhoff recounts his journey from National Guard lieutenant to disillusioned patriot in this disappointing combat memoir-cum-polemic. Rieckhoff admits that he thought the reasons for invading Iraq were "bullshit," but volunteered to go anyway. His experiences in Iraq—patrolling the chaotic streets of Baghdad in the months after its occupation—only confirmed his initial judgment that the invasion "was one of the greatest foreign policy mistakes in our nation's history." Rieckhoff is anything but humble. An Amherst grad (as he often interjects), he finds his recruiter repellant—a "slick, fat... Sergeant [who] smelled like a dirty ashtray"— but enlists anyway. President Bush is "arrogant" and "a bully," and Coalition Provisional Authority head Paul Bremer is "ignorant and out-of-touch." Rieckhoff is bipartisan in his contempt: when the Kerry campaign ignores his advice, he dismisses the Democratic presidential candidate as "a calculating and coached politician." Finally, he and a "small band of pissed-off visionaries" founded their own organization, Operation Truth, to get out the word. In the end, Rieckhoff has a story to tell, but he undermines his credibility with his arrogance and petty offside remarks. (May)

Risen, James. ***State of War.***

From Publishers Weekly
Starred Review. Lucid, balanced and brimming with surprises, this is a-to borrow a notorious phrase-slam dunk exposé of the CIA's recent snafus. New York Times reporter Risen is broadly sympathetic to the CIA, and his tactful use of inside sources shifts much of the blame away from field agents and toward the brass in Washington, where CIA Director George Tenet's eagerness to please his political masters and Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld's bureaucratic skills create the conditions for a perfect storm of intelligence failures. The book's disclosures about secret prisons, "renditions"-the transfer of suspects to countries which may torture them-and domestic wiretaps are likely to be talking points for some time, but its lasting value will be as a record of how the CIA came so tantalizingly close to the truth about Iraq's nonexistent nuclear arsenal. The retelling of one undercover operation shows the agency had direct evidence that there was no nuclear program in Iraq, but chose to doubt its source. Other scenes from the secret war on terror make novelist John Le Carre look like a timid plotter: a single misdirected message in 2004 brings down the agency's entire spy network in Iran, four years after a harebrained scheme had given Tehran flawed blueprints for a nuclear weapon-hoping to sow confusion, but possibly helping Iran to arm itself faster. Risen has written a thrilling, depressing and worrying book.

Stewart, Rory. ***The Places in Between.***

Review from Publishers Weekly
We never really find out why Stewart decided to walk across Afghanistan only a few months after the Taliban were deposed, but what emerges from the last leg of his two-year journey across Asia is a lesson in good travel writing. By turns harrowing and meditative, Stewart's trek through Afghanistan in the footsteps of the 15th-century emperor Babur is edifying at every step,

grounded by his knowledge of local history, politics and dialects. His prose is lean and unsentimental: whether pushing through chest-high snow in the mountains of Hazarajat or through villages still under de facto Taliban control, his descriptions offer a cool assessment of a landscape and a people eviscerated by war, forgotten by time and isolated by geography. The well-oiled apparatus of his writing mimics a dispassionate camera shutter in its precision. But if we are to accompany someone on such a highly personal quest, we want to know who that person is. Unfortunately, Stewart shares little emotional background; the writer's identity is discerned best by inference. Sometimes we get the sense he cares more for preserving history than for the people who live in it (and for whom historical knowledge would be luxury). But remembering Geraldo Rivera's gunslinging escapades, perhaps we could use less sap and more clarity about this troubled and fascinating country.(May)

Stewart, Rory. ***Prince of the Marshes.***

From Publishers Weekly
Soon after Stewart, a British diplomat and professional adventurer, traveled to Iraq late in 2003 to search for work, he was named a provincial governor. In characteristic understatement, he says of his new role: "I spoke little Arabic, and had never managed a shattered and undeveloped province of 850,000." His job was supposed to be easy: the province, Maysan, nestled along the Iranian border deep in Iraq's Shia south, was one of the country's most homogenous, and nearly all of its citizens had fought against Saddam. Stewart spent most of his time navigating through a byzantine and thoroughly unfamiliar political landscape of tribal leaders, Islamist militias, Communist dissidents and Iranian intelligence agents. When he asks an adviser in Baghdad what his goals should be, his friend responds that if, within a year, the province hasn't descended into anarchy and Stewart can serve him "some decent ice cream," he will be satisfied. Engrossing and often darkly humorous, his book should be required reading for every political commentator who knows exactly what to do in Iraq despite never having dealt with recalcitrant interpreters or an angry mob. In the end, Stewart prevails and is rewarded with an appointment to Dhi Qar, a much more dangerous province with less military support. 16 pages of photos. (Aug.)

Woodward, Bob. ***Bush at War.***

From Publishers Weekly
Quoting liberally from transcripts of National Security Council meetings and hundreds of interviews with those in the presidential inner circle, including four hours of interviews with Bush himself, the Washington Post assistant managing editor, best-selling author and Watergate muckraker manages to provide a nonpartisan account of the first 100 days of the post September 11 war on terror. While Condoleezza Rice, Colin Powell, President Bush and CIA Director George Tenet are impressive, Donald Rumsfeld and Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz come off as hawkish and reactionary, repeatedly calling for a strike against Iraq in the first days of the conflict while pushing for a more widespread, global war. Woodward does an excellent job of exposing the seat-of-their-pants planning sessions conducted at the highest levels of power and the hectic diplomacy practiced by Powell and Bush in trying to get the air war against Afghanistan off the ground. He also brings to light the divisions among the planners concerning the bombing in Afghanistan, which made little impact until late in the game, when the Taliban

lines were finally hit. In addition to recounting the heated arguments about when and how to retaliate against Al Qaeda, Woodward also follows Special Ops agents flown into Afghanistan with millions in payoff money weeks in advance of any other American presence. Living in harsh conditions with little to no support, these "110 CIA officers and 316 Special Forces personnel," in this account, ran the show, and effectively won the war with their intelligence gathering operations. While at times relying a bit too heavily on transcribed conversations, Woodward nonetheless offers one of the first truly insightful and informative accounts of the decision making process in the war on terror. 16 pages of b&w photos.

Woodward, Bob. ***Plan of Attack: Bush at War Part II.***

From Publishers Weekly
Based on exhaustive research and remarkable access to the White House, including two sessions with President Bush and more than 75 interviews with administration officials, veteran Washington Post assistant managing editor Woodward delivers an engrossing blow-by-blow of the run-up to war in Iraq. In November 2001, just months after September 11, Woodward reports, Bush pulled aside defense secretary Donald Rumsfeld and asked him to secretly begin updating war plans for Iraq. Sixteen months later, in March 2003, after an intense war-planning effort, a tense political fight at home and a carefully crafted "if-you-don't-we-will" diplomatic strategy with the U.N., the American invasion began. Woodward has penned a forceful, often disturbing narrative that captures the deep personality and policy clashes within the Bush administration. Bush, along with Dick Cheney, Condoleezza Rice, Karl Rove and Paul Wolfowitz, are portrayed as believing in a sweeping mission to export democracy and to have America be viewed as strong and willing to walk the walk. They are counterbalanced by Colin Powell, who emerges here as a reluctant warrior, a pragmatic voice—eventually muted—cautioning the president against a rush to war. The most stunning aspect of the story, however, is the glaring intelligence failure of George Tenet's CIA, from bad WMD information to what Woodward reports as the outright manipulation of questionable intelligence to make the case for war. With this book, Woodward, the author of an astonishing nine number-one bestsellers, has delivered his most important and impressive work in years. Ultimately, this first-class work of contemporary history will be remembered for shedding needed light on the Iraq War, whatever its final outcome.

Woodward, Bob. ***State of Denial, Bush at War Part III.***

From Publishers Weekly
If there ever was a crystalline indictment of a president's wartime decisions, this is it. In the third volume exploring the political carnage and bureaucratic infighting prompted by the September 11 attacks, legendary investigative journalist Woodward (Bush at War, Plan of Attack) dissects the Bush administration's conduct of the war in Iraq. The picture isn't a pretty one, and Woodward's disarming, matter-of-fact prose makes his page-turning account more powerful still. The incompetence and arrogance on display in the highest levels of the executive branch is as stunning-and as unsettling-as the dismay voiced by civilians and soldiers who endeavor and fail to open the administration's eyes to the failures in Iraq, from the complex security challenges to simple logistical matters like securing sufficient translators. Unable to manage the war they unleashed, the principals-President George W. Bush, Vice President Dick Cheney, Secretary of

Defense Donald Rumsfeld and national security advisor, later Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice-fare poorly here. Many of the charges are familiar-the president lacks inquisitiveness, the vice president is obsessed with WMD, Rice is "the worst security advisor in modern times"-but gel anew in the light of Woodward's explication. The breakout star of this disturbing spectacle is Rumsfeld, who presides over the conflict with a supreme self confidence that literally leaves Woodward at a loss for words. If journalism is the first page of history, then Woodward's opus will be required reading for any would-be historians of the time.

Wright, Lawrence. ***The Looming Tower: Al Quaeda and the Road to 9/11.***

From Publishers Weekly
Starred Review. Wright, a New Yorker writer, brings exhaustive research and delightful prose to one of the best books yet on the history of terrorism. He begins with the observation that, despite an impressive record of terror and assassination, post–WWarII, Islamic militants failed to establish theocracies in any Arab country. Many helped Afghanistan resist the Russian invasion of 1979 before their unemployed warriors stepped up efforts at home. Al-Qaeda, formed in Afghanistan in 1988 and led by Osama bin Laden, pursued a different agenda, blaming America for Islam's problems. Less wealthy than believed, bin Laden's talents lay in organization and PR, Wright asserts. Ten years later, bin Laden blew up U.S. embassies in Africa and the destroyer Cole, opening the floodgates of money and recruits. Wright's step-by-step description of these attacks reveals that planning terror is a sloppy business, leaving a trail of clues that, in the case of 9/11, raised many suspicions among individuals in the FBI, CIA and NSA. Wright shows that 9/11 could have been prevented if those agencies had worked together. As a fugitive, bin Ladin's days as a terror mastermind may be past, but his success has spawned swarms of imitators. This is an important, gripping and profoundly disheartening book. (Aug.)

Annotated bibliography of books on 9/11 addendum:

Goldsmith, Jack. ***The Terror Presidency: Law and Judgment Inside the Bush Administration.***
From Amazon.com
A central player's account of the clash between the rule of law and the necessity of defending America. Jack Goldsmith's duty as head of the Office of Legal Counsel was to advise President Bush on what he could and could not do . . . legally. Immediately after taking the job in October 2003, Goldsmith began to see that the work of his predecessors, whose opinions were the legal framework governing the conduct of the military and intelligence agencies in the war on terror, were deeply flawed.

Goldsmith is a conservative lawyer who understands the imperative of averting another 9/11. But his unflinching insistence that we abide by the law put him on a collision course with powerful figures in the administration. In The Terror Presidency he shows how Bush damaged his own presidency and compromised the ability of his successors to respond forcefully in times of crisis.

Mayer, Jane. ***The Dark Side: The Inside Story of How The War on Terror Turned into a War on American Ideals.***

From Publishers Weekly
This hard-hitting expose examines both the controversial excesses of the war on terror and the home-front struggle to circumvent legal obstacles to its prosecution. New Yorker correspondent Mayer (Strange Justice) details the battle within the Bush Administration over a new anti-terrorism policy of harsh interrogations, indefinite detentions without due process, extraordinary renditions, secret CIA prisons and warrantless wiretappings. Fighting with memos and legal briefs, Mayer reports, hard-liners led by Dick Cheney, his aide David Addington and then-Justice Department lawyer John Yoo rejected any constraints on the treatment of prisoners or limitations on presidential power in fighting terrorism, while less militant administration lawyers invoked the Constitution and international law to oppose their initiatives. As a counterpoint to the wrangling over the definition of torture and the Geneva Conventions, the author looks at the use of techniques like waterboarding, stress positions, sleep deprivation and sexual humiliation against prisoners by the American military and CIA; her chilling account compellingly argues that this "enhanced interrogation" regimen constitutes torture. The result is a must-read: a meticulous behind-the-scenes reconstruction of policymaking that demonstrates how legal abstractions became an ugly reality.

Suskind, Ron. ***The One Percent Doctrine: Deep Inside America's Pursuit of Its Enemies Since 9/11.***

From The New Yorker
In November, 2001, Suskind writes, Vice-President Dick Cheney announced that if there was "a one percent chance" that a threat was real "we have to treat it as a certainty in terms of our response." He added, "It's not about our analysis, or finding a preponderance of evidence." This view of a White House dangerously indifferent to facts is familiar from, among other sources, Suskind's "The Price of Loyalty," but he adds much here that is disconcerting, particularly regarding the embrace of torture. (It's hard to shake the image of Bush asking, literally, for Ayman al-Zawahiri's head, which the C.I.A. briefly thought it had found in a riverbed in Afghanistan.) Suskind, whose main source seems to be the former C.I.A. director George Tenet (to whom he is very kind), has made news with revelations about Western Union's coöperation with the C.I.A. and about a plan to release cyanide gas in subways, although it's not clear that this threat was more real than other phantom's the White House chased.

Annotated bibliography of books on 9/11 addendum:

Chandrasekaran, Rajiv. ***Imperial Life in the Emerald City: Inside Iraq's Green Zone.***
From the New York Times.
Regardless of how the war ends, Iraq is not Vietnam. This is true not just militarily and politically but also in the reporting about the two conflicts. For many journalists who covered Vietnam and subsequently wrote books about the war, the experience could be understood only as a hallucinogenic nightmare, and they described it in gonzo prose to match. The reality of Iraq is much more frightening than a bad acid trip, but the writing about this continuing fiasco has been clear-eyed and sober, and all the more powerful for it. This book tells the bureaucratic story of Iraq's Year 1, the year after the overthrow of Saddam Hussein, when the United States was the legal occupying power and responsible for the country's administration. The primary mechanism for that work was the Coalition Provisional Authority, headquartered in the Green Zone, a blast-barrier-encased compound created around Hussein's Baghdad palace, on the west bank of the Tigris. Chandrasekaran, The Washington Post's Baghdad bureau chief during this period, catalogs a lethal combination of official arrogance and ineptitude behind those walls that doomed Iraq to its bloody present every bit as much as insufficient military manpower did. This book was the basis for the Matt Damon film ***The Green Zone.***

Goldsmith, Jack. ***The Terror Presidency: Law and Judgment Inside the Bush Administration.***
From Amazon.com
A central player's account of the clash between the rule of law and the necessity of defending America. Jack Goldsmith's duty as head of the Office of Legal Counsel was to advise President Bush on what he could and could not do . . . legally. Immediately after taking the job in October 2003, Goldsmith began to see that the work of his predecessors, whose opinions were the legal framework governing the conduct of the military and intelligence agencies in the war on terror, were deeply flawed.

Goldsmith is a conservative lawyer who understands the imperative of averting another 9/11. But his unflinching insistence that we abide by the law put him on a collision course with powerful figures in the administration. In The Terror Presidency he shows how Bush damaged his own presidency and compromised the ability of his successors to respond forcefully in times of crisis.

Halberstam, David. ***Firehouse.***

The late David Halberstam has spent a lifetime defining the events that have shaped the modern age of our nation, both politically and psychologically. From his reporting on the Civil Rights movement to his award-winning coverage of Vietnam, Halberstam is often considered the voice that personifies our nation's collective consciousness. Following in the successes of his national bestsellers, Halberstam turned his astute eye to the latest events that entwined themselves within the American psyche. ***Firehouse*** is a portrait of Engine 40 Ladder 35 located on the Upper West Side in New York City, which lost twelve men in the World Trade Center attack. ***Firehouse*** also offers insight into daily life in a firehouse that is representative of every urban firehouse in America. This is a book full of astonishing detail: the lingo, the relationships, the dangers, and simple daily life.

Mayer, Jane. ***The Dark Side: The Inside Story of How The War on Terror Turned into a War on American Ideals.***

From Publishers Weekly: This hard-hitting expose examines both the controversial excesses of the war on terror and the home-front struggle to circumvent legal obstacles to its prosecution. New Yorker

correspondent Mayer (Strange Justice) details the battle within the Bush Administration over a new anti-terrorism policy of harsh interrogations, indefinite detentions without due process, extraordinary renditions, secret CIA prisons and warrantless wiretappings. Fighting with memos and legal briefs, Mayer reports, hard-liners led by Dick Cheney, his aide David Addington and then-Justice Department lawyer John Yoo rejected any constraints on the treatment of prisoners or limitations on presidential power in fighting terrorism, while less militant administration lawyers invoked the Constitution and international law to oppose their initiatives. As a counterpoint to the wrangling over the definition of torture and the Geneva Conventions, the author looks at the use of techniques like waterboarding, stress positions, sleep deprivation and sexual humiliation against prisoners by the American military and CIA; her chilling account compellingly argues that this "enhanced interrogation" regimen constitutes torture. The result is a must-read: a meticulous behind-the-scenes reconstruction of policymaking that demonstrates how legal abstractions became an ugly reality.

Suskind, Ron. ***The One Percent Doctrine: Deep Inside America's Pursuit of Its Enemies Since 9/11.***

From The New Yorker
In November, 2001, Suskind writes, Vice-President Dick Cheney announced that if there was "a one percent chance" that a threat was real "we have to treat it as a certainty in terms of our response." He added, "It's not about our analysis, or finding a preponderance of evidence." This view of a White House dangerously indifferent to facts is familiar from, among other sources, Suskind's "The Price of Loyalty," but he adds much here that is disconcerting, particularly regarding the embrace of torture. (It's hard to shake the image of Bush asking, literally, for Ayman al-Zawahiri's head, which the C.I.A. briefly thought it had found in a riverbed in Afghanistan.) Suskind, whose main source seems to be the former C.I.A. director George Tenet (to whom he is very kind), has made news with revelations about Western Union's coöperation with the C.I.A. and about a plan to release cyanide gas in subways, although it's not clear that this threat was more real than other phantom's the White House chased.