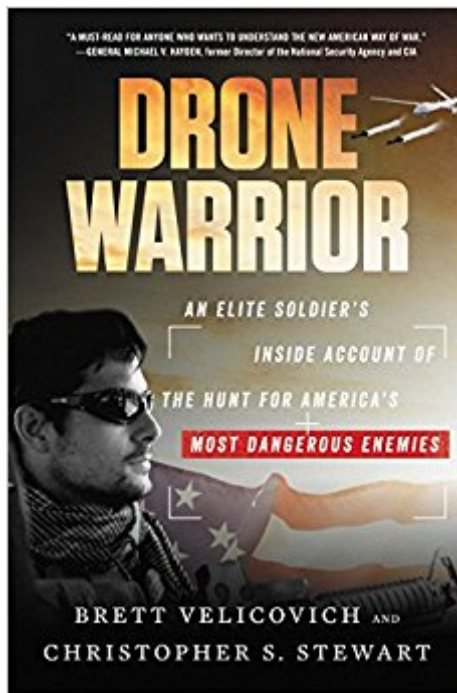




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# Drone Warrior: An Elite Soldier's Inside Account Of The Hunt For America's Most Dangerous Enemies



## Synopsis

“A must read for anyone who wants to understand the new American way of war.” —General Michael V. Hayden, former Director of the Central Intelligence Agency and the National Security Agency A former special operations member takes us inside America’s covert drone war in this headline-making, never-before-told account for fans of Zero Dark Thirty and Lone Survivor, told by a Pulitzer Prize-winning Wall Street Journal writer and filled with eye-opening and sure to be controversial details. For nearly a decade Brett Velicovich was at the center of America’s new warfare: using unmanned aerial vehicles •drones• to take down the world’s deadliest terrorists across the globe. One of an elite handful in the entire military with the authority to select targets and issue death orders, he worked in concert with the full human and technological network of American intelligence •assets, analysts, spies, informants• and the military’s elite operatives, to stalk, capture, and eliminate high value targets in al-Qaeda and ISIS. In this remarkable book, co-written with journalist Christopher S. Stewart, Velicovich offers unprecedented perspective on the remarkably complex nature of drone operations and the rigorous and wrenching decisions behind them. In intimate gripping detail, he shares insider, action-packed stories of the most coordinated, advanced, and secret missions that neutralized terrorists, preserved the lives of US and international warriors across the globe, and saved countless innocents in the hottest conflict zones today. Drone Warrior also chronicles the US military’s evolution in the past decade and the technology driving it. Velicovich considers the future it foretells, and speaks candidly on the physical and psychological toll it exacts, including the impact on his own life. He reminds us that while these machines can kill, they can also be used productively to improve and preserve life, including protecting endangered species, work he is engaged in today. Joining warfare classics such as American Sniper, Lone Survivor, and No Easy Day, Drone Warrior is the definitive account of our nation’s capacity and capability for war in the modern age.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Eric Blehm, award-winning author of the New York Times bestsellers *Fearless* and *the only thing worth dying for*, interviews Brett Velicovich about *Drone Warrior*. [View larger](#)

Eric Blehm: While writing this book, how did you walk the line required to both tell an accurate and compelling story, but also not disclose information that could endanger our warriors and success in future operations? Brett Velicovich: Department of Defense Pre-Publication Security Review Office (DOPSR) spent approximately 22 months vetting the manuscript. It took me longer to get the book through the approval process than it took me to write it. In the end, Pentagon representatives stated this book has more classified drone operations APPROVED for public release than any other book they have ever worked on to clear previously. EB: What is about drones that first drew you into this world? BV: In 2004, in Afghanistan as a young specialist, a detachment of Special Forces guys let me fly their RQ-11 Raven just outside of our safe house in Jalalabad. We threw it up in the air and watched as it buzzed around a few hundred feet above us streaming live video of the terrain below. I was blown away.

EB: In the book, I was struck by the combination of the astonishing technology in drones and the deep detective work that goes into each kill and capture mission. How did a typical mission unfold? BV: Our success and precision in finding targets came from the massive amounts of intelligence data we had access to over the years and the interconnected networks and individuals who worked countless hours to ensure the guys at my level didn't have obstacles in the way of us doing our jobs: hunting down the enemy. EB: We've all heard about the emotional toll carried by soldiers in war zones. How did this kind of war • being in a dimly-lit box almost twenty-four hours a day, watching a dozen TVs connected to drones affect you? BV: Every soldier has his or her own trauma to deal with, and I can't put myself in the place of the guys who were kicking down doors or running

through the hail of bullets after the targets we chose. Those guys are the closest thing to superhuman, if they weren't fighting for their country they would be professional athletes. My emotional toll was a bit different as an intel guy, it wasn't one where I came back from war and regretted all the things that I did. I loved every minute of my work. The psychological toll I had to overcome came from this constant feeling in the war zones of having the weight of the world on my shoulders. The feeling that if my team didn't find that terrorist that day, that he lived another day to hurt American soldiers or innocent civilians. Those things kept me up at night.

EB: With drones becoming more easily available through large retailers and their technology getting more and more sophisticated, what are the risks of terrorist groups using drones against us? BV: We are already seeing the risks of terrorists getting their hands on similar capabilities due to the huge proliferation of drone technology in the last few years. ISIS taking consumer drones and modifying them in a way to conduct attacks against coalition troops. They have been modifying drones with improvised explosives and creating trigger mechanisms to release them from the air, all the while filming the attacks for their social media propaganda. That goes to show you how capable even off-the-shelf drone technology is in the wrong hands. EB: You end the book discussing your work using drones to combat poachers of wildlife in Africa, and you're also helping train the Somalia government in drone surveillance and counterterrorism; how is your current work a reflection of our drone-dominated future? BV: I'm a big advocate right now in the drone industry for sharing that technology with the right people who can use it to help create a positive impact. One of those huge issues is wildlife conservation, we have a project called the African Eye, where we are in the process of repurposing some of the same technology I used for war and use it to fight poachers destroying these eco-systems in East Africa.

"A must read for anyone who wants to understand the new American way of war." (General Michael V. Hayden, former Director of the Central Intelligence Agency and the National Security Agency) "A uniquely detailed account of how special forces operatives and the technology behind them have changed warfare in the twenty-first century." (Bruce Hoffman, director of Georgetown University's Center for Security Studies) "Drone Warrior reads like a great episode of Homeland, a gripping firsthand account of what it's like inside the United States' most secretive military operations." (Isha Sesay, CNN anchor, author of the forthcoming *The Long Road Back*) "War is deeply personal. Drone Warrior

takes us into the lives of those whose fight we often see only from the sky. (Gayle Tzemach Lemmon, New York Times bestselling author of *Ashley's War* and *The Dressmaker of Khair Khana*)

"Brett Velicovich and Christopher S. Stewart offer an unparalleled look into the ubiquitous use of drones on today's battlefield. Their story is as pulsating as it is sobering...I couldn't put *Drone Warrior* down. You won't be able to either."

(Seth G. Jones, political scientist at the RAND Corporation, author of

**GO INSIDE AMERICA'S SECRET DRONE WAR IN THIS HEADLINE-MAKING, NEVER-BEFORE-TOLD ACCOUNT FROM A FORMER DELTA FORCE INTELLIGENCE SOLDIER AND A PULITZER PRIZE-WINNING WALL STREET JOURNAL REPORTER**

For nearly a decade, Brett Velicovich was at the center of America's new generation of warfare: an arsenal of unmanned aerial vehicles—drones—taking down the world's deadliest terrorists across the globe. One of the few elite members in the entire military with the authority to select targets and issue death orders, he and his small intelligence team worked in concert with the full human and technological network of America's intelligence assets—analysts, spies, informants, and the military's most elite and secretive operatives—to stalk, capture, and eliminate high-value targets in Al Qaeda and ISIS.

Now this decorated veteran, with journalist Christopher S. Stewart, tells his story in a remarkable book packed with more classified drone operations cleared for public release than any other account ever published, according to the U.S. government. *Drone Warrior* offers an unprecedented view into the remarkably complex nature of drone missions and the rigorous and wrenching on-the-ground decisions behind them.

With intimate, gripping precision, he shares stories of the most coordinated, advanced, and secret missions that neutralized terrorists, preserved the lives of U.S. and international warriors across the globe, and saved countless innocents in the hottest conflict zones today, including the Middle East and Africa. Velicovich chronicles killing the first leaders of ISIS; tracking down the group's current leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi; and killing and capturing all but six of the twenty most wanted terrorists across Iraq in only three months. He also tells a heartbreaking story of saving an abducted Iraqi woman and using drones to find a group of the missing schoolgirls abducted by Nigeria's Boko Haram. *Drone Warrior* also chronicles the U.S. military's evolution in the past decade and the technology driving it. Velicovich considers the future it foretells, and speaks candidly on the physical and psychological toll it exacts, including the impact his missions had on his own life. He reminds us that while these machines can kill, they can also be used to preserve life, including protecting endangered species

and supporting humanitarian operations – work he is engaged in today. Joining warfare classics such as American Sniper, Lone Survivor, and No Easy Day, Drone Warrior is the definitive account of our nation's capacity and capability for war in the modern age.

This is a well-written book, with very few grammatical errors, and lots of wartime action. The language at times is a little vulgar, but these are relatively young people in a tense situation and what would appear to be a limited vocabulary. I found it to be self-serving on the part of the author, but that is my personal hangup. I would recommend it, with the understanding that war is not something to be viewed as one would view a combat video game. Real people die and real families suffer on both sides.

A side of the war on terror that most do not know about. Enjoyed the book

Very good book but slow in parts.

A well told story of what life was like for intelligence operators in the box that controlled our drone fleet.

Very interesting look at how drones were really used to help find and defeat the enemy.

Wow! A real eye opener about the new way of fighting a war. Excellent stories of missions, with the complex challenges of life/death decisions made at the press of a button. Couldn't put it down....you won't be disappointed.

I served most of my 20 year military career in Special Operations. I have read countless books on our military history to gain a better perspective of military tactics and operations. I can honestly say this is the best book I have ever read dissecting military operations, specifically in the drone era. Truly exceptional!

Well written accounts of modern technological warfare, without getting too deep into the workings of the technology itself. We get a glimpse into the mind of the modern warfighter and see the toll it takes on the brave men and women who fight for our freedom. Drones have changed the war - giving advanced knowledge to fighters on the ground (making them safer) and has created a new

kind of soldier. Grab a coffee and read to the end!

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