

Clear and Present Danger Study Guide

Clear and Present Danger by Tom Clancy

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Plot Summary

This is the fictional account of US covert actions against the Colombian Cartel drug trade. The narrative ranges from discussions in the Oval office between the President and Directors of the CIA and FBI, to close combat operations by US soldiers in the Colombian jungle and the exploits of the helicopter crews and CIA operatives who provide them support.

The story begins in the Oval office at the White House, where the President authorizes a series of clandestine actions against the Colombia Drug Cartel operations. It is an election year and he has failed to keep his election promise to do something about drugs coming in from Colombia.

Off the Caribbean coast, the crew of Coast Guard Cutter Panache discovers the brutal murder of the owner and family and seizure of a sixty-foot luxury yacht. The "Pirates" are apprehended and taken back to Mobile, Alabama. In the meantime a crack team of Spanish speaking sergeants are recruited from the US Army's Light Infantry Divisions and taken to a remote training camp high in the Colorado Rockies. They are inserted by a single helicopter into the jungle near the Colombia coast, where they carry out surveillance of the Cartel's secret airstrips and report to a satellite communication link when a drug-carrying plane takes off for the US.

It turns out that the murdered owner of the luxury yacht was, in fact, the chief agent in the money laundering of the Cartel's financial assets throughout the US and Europe. When the US Treasury Department mounts an operation to seize and sequester these assets, the Cartel leaders retaliate by assassinating the FBI Director on his secret mission to get approval from the Colombian District Attorney for the covert in-country operations.

The President of the United States declares that the Colombian Drug Cartel is now an enemy of the United States and the clandestine surveillance teams are redeployed in Colombia. This time their mission is to seek and destroy the drug processing sites in the high mountains near Medellin. At the same time, another covert operation is mounted which entails dropping smart bombs on the homes of drug Cartel leaders. Felix Cortez, the intelligence agent for the Cartel, cuts a deal with Admiral Cutter who has been told, by the president, to halt the covert operations. In exchange for continued secrecy, Cortez forces Admiral Cutter to betray the locations and extraction sites for the in-country ground troops.

Jack Ryan, the newly-appointed Director of Intelligence at the CIA, finds out about the betrayal of the US army soldiers in Colombia and mounts a rescue operation, which involves the Pave-Low helicopter and the Coast Guard Cutter Panache. The remnants of the ground teams are recovered, including the Cartel's chief intelligence officer, Cortez. Then Ryan confronts the President about the failed clandestine operations in the presence of two members of Congress.

The members of Congress agree to keep the whole affair secret, but the incumbent President is defeated in the election.



Prologue:Situation

Prologue:Situation Summary

In the Oval office, the President discusses an operation which he calls SHOWBOAT with his National Security Advisor, Vice Admiral James Cutter. He recalls that he made an election promise to do something about the drug problem but that nothing has been achieved. Cutter reminds him that threats to national security cannot be handled by police agencies, either national security has been threatened, or it has not. The President gives Cutter the okay to proceed but re-iterates that there must be results.

On the Caribbean coast the owner of the Empire Builder inspects some new crew members coming on board. By nine o'clock in the morning the multi-million dollar yacht has slipped its moorings and headed out to sea.

It is dawn and the Blackhawk helicopter is making a covert insertion. The team leader is sergeant Chavez and it will be his last mission. The Blackhawk touches down for just a brief moment and Chavez leads his men out and lies prostrate on the ground until the helicopter flies on. Then he and his men set off on a dead run towards the tree line.

At the China Lake Naval weapons testing facility, a mixed team of civilian technicians and some Navy ordinance experts are testing a new bomb

All these separate events are part of a sequence, which will lead to unexpected and fearful consequences.

Prologue:Situation Analysis

The main component of these apparently unconnected events is the scene in the Oval office and the President's justification for approving the SHOWBOAT operation. The oblique reference to enemies within, anticipated by the founding fathers, is a foreshadowing of the underlying theme of the whole book but is obfuscated by the accompanying incidents.

The covert insertion of ground troops and the successful testing of a special smart bomb are not really critical for the reader to understand as they are really part of normal operations of the army and navy, but the description of the yacht Empire Builder is necessary to understand the action later undertaken by the Coast Guard cutter Panache.

The technique of switching from different situations in different locations is a technique maintained throughout the book. Each separate scene is contemporaneous with the preceding and subsequent scenes. This "cut to" method is more visual in structure and is more often found in the cinema.



Chapter 1, The King of SAR

Chapter 1, The King of SAR Summary

Red Wegener is the oldest lieutenant commander in the United States Coast Guard. He has the reputation of being the "King of Search-and-Rescue" missions (SAR) and is picking up his new ship, Panache. The ship is a total mess and blocked from leaving the dock by a broken crane, but within ten days Wegener extricates the cutter and takes it to Baltimore to finish its outfitting. In seven weeks, under Red Wegener's leadership, the Panache is on its way to Mobile, Alabama to take up duties.

Their first mission is to check on a yacht, under American flag, whose owner is late returning to Mobile from his cruise south; the sixty-two foot yacht has been spotted by a routine air patrol. They intercept the Empire Builder and though the yacht tries to escape, the coast guard crew boards and finds two men on board, trying to clear up the evidence of a brutal crime. The owner, his wife, and children have apparently been murdered; there is also evidence that the wife, and maybe the children, were raped before they were tossed overboard.

Chapter 1, The King of SAR Analysis

The description of how Red Wegener extricates his new command from a nearly defunct shipyard and how he encourages and leads his new crew is a further testament to his established reputation as one of the best in the Coast Guard Service. The Panache will play a role at both the beginning and end of the story.

The brutal murder of the yacht owner and his family is unexplained and neither is the motive for it. The details of the brutal crime are thoroughly exposed by the coast guard crew. There is no continuity or elaboration of the brief introduction of events on the yacht in the Prologue. The horrible manner of the murders is a prelude to making the reader aware of the savagery of the drug trade in the Caribbean. The indignation of the crew and their simplistic suggestions for immediate justice inevitably draws the sympathy of the reader. The general abhorrence to "druggies" is a universal theme throughout the book.



Chapter 2, Creatures of the Night

Chapter 2, Creatures of the Night Summary

At the immigration desk at the Colombian Airport, a fit-looking, six-foot tall American with bushy black hair and a lantern jaw is declaring that he is in Colombia on business for a few days. He speaks fluent Spanish and the passport says he is J. T. Williams. In fact, the man is Clark from the CIA Operations Directorate where, officially, he is an instructor at "the Farm." Clark knows that the chief of station is unaware of his arrival in Colombia.

Staff Sergeant Domingo Chavez is a member of the 3rd Battalion, 17th Light Infantry Division and is a training at Hunter-Liggett Military Reservation in California. His training is interrupted by a message telling him to report to headquarters at Fort Ord by helicopter.

When he gets there he is told to report to a man whose name tag says "Smith." Colonel Smith tells Chavez he has an opportunity to take part in a special job, which might be a little dangerous but probably will not be. It will last a couple of months, six at the outside, and at the end of the mission he will be promoted to an E-7 grade and have his own choice of assignments. Smith, in fact is Edgar Jeffries, and is no longer an army officer, having been seconded to the CIA.

Chapter 2, Creatures of the Night Analysis

In this chapter, the reader is introduced to two important characters in the story—Clark of the CIA and Sergeant Chavez. As always there is plenty of exposition about the way the army works and the book also details the subtle ways that recruitment for covert operations begin and are organized. The authority for the CIA to recruit active army members is not explained, but Chavez's acceptance was expected and pre-approved by "headquarters."

The blandishments to sell the idea of engagement in the covert operation are fairly crude and the manipulation of the recruits is further described in later chapters.

The fact that a number of men are leaving the training facility in an irregular fashion is noticed, however, and this fact is critical later in the story when the security of the operation on which they will eventually be engaged is compromised.

The character of the man named Clark is further developed. A little more information is revealed about him as he arrives, under cover, in Colombia but the reader is not as well informed about him as they are about Chavez, though Clark will play as big a role in the operations as the Sergeant.



Chapter 3, The Panache Procedure

Chapter 3, The Panache Procedure Summary

On board the coast guard cutter, Captain Wegener is carrying out an inspection of the boat and crew. They are returning to their base but expecting a storm before they arrive. The atmosphere among the ship's crew is tense with outrage and frustration at what they have witnessed and at the arrogance of their two prisoners. After a good deal of soul searching, Red Wegener decides to do something about the situation. As the storm develops, he brings them to the wardroom, where, with certain carefully selected crew members, he conducts a court martial. The basis for this action is embodied in an old 18th century reference book of regulations, informally called "Rocks and Shoals." In fact this book has been replaced by the Uniform Code of Military Justice.

One of the prisoners remains defiant throughout the proceedings but the other begins to break, especially when his companion is sentenced to hang, and he is forced to witness, what is apparently, the execution on the deck in the stormy seas. When both prisoners are delivered to the DEA agents in the helicopter, the next day, the agents are told to keep them separated as one has confessed and the other has not.

Chapter 3, The Panache Procedure Analysis

The bogus court martial on board Panache is, of course, a graphic re-enactment of the usual procedure for dealing with piracy in a bygone age. The catharsis of immediate punishment for brutal crimes carries its own harsh justice and satisfaction. The playing of the scene could easily have taken place in another era and gives the reader a realistic description of what such a procedure would have been like.

Unfortunately evidence and confessions obtained under these conditions lead to legally tainted evidence. In later chapters the protection from justice for the two murderers under the cloak niceties of legal correctness is eventually abandoned. But the reader can, for the moment, vicariously enjoy the satisfaction of justice untrammelled by legal restraints.



Chapter 4, Preliminaries

Chapter 4, Preliminaries Summary

While Chavez and his companions are on their way by private jet to their training location in Colorado, the loss of such a valuable soldier is discussed by Lieutenant Tim Jackson and his older brother, Commander Jefferson Jackson, USN. Over drinks at the Monterey Officers Club, they also note the early deployment of a whole bunch of sergeants, all of whom they note are of Spanish descent.

In Colombia, Clark makes contact with another undercover CIA agent, Carlos Larson, a skilled pilot who runs a flying school and whose services are very much in demand. Larson takes Clark on a reconnaissance trip in his Twin Beech. They fly over the mountains towards Medellin and note a lot of castle like homes, which have all been built on hilltops.

Chapter 4, Preliminaries Analysis

The parallel development of the different strands of the story continues. Sergeant Domingo Chavez is on his way to training in an unknown location, and Clark meets up with another undercover CIA agent in Colombia. Carlos Jackson, though a relatively inexperienced agent, has established himself in a position where he can perform invaluable services for Clark. His ability to move about Columbia and his access to aircraft is part of his successful cover as a flight school instructor for the Cartel

Back in California, the sudden disappearance of a group of some of the most capable sergeants, all of whom are Hispanic, has been noted by two brothers, one of whom is a commander in the United States Navy and destined for command of a carrier wing. This seemingly trivial incident has important implications later in the story.



Chapter 5, Beginnings

Chapter 5, Beginnings Summary

Domingo Chavez is in a training camp in the mountains of Colorado, described as a mountain hideaway by the colonel in charge. The team, now complete, is being trained to run and exercise at a high altitude and all the men are feeling it. Chavez makes friends with Julio Vega, from the 10th Mountain Division and a native of Chicago.

In a CIA house on St. Kitts Island in the Caribbean, Clark is meeting with Ritter, the Deputy Director Operations. He is showing Ritter photos of the terrain in Colombia and tells Ritter that the idea of surveillance of the airstrips is a good one but in the end it will not produce very rewarding results. Also he thinks the roughness of the terrain has been underestimated. Clark outlines, what is a more effective plan in his mind, to produce greater damage to the Cartel and Ritter shows interest but remains uncommitted.

Ernesto Escobedo is one of the most important leaders of the Cartel. He is now a man of uncountable wealth, has a beautiful wife and three fine sons. He regards himself as a class robber-baron capitalist and wants to emulate those similar men who founded the great fortunes in the United States. He recalls the savage price he exacted on the people who killed his father, killing their wives and children before their eyes before executing them as well. Escobedo, unrealistically, wants to be respected in the international business world.

Chapter 5, Beginnings Analysis

This chapter introduces Julio Vega as Chavez's closest buddy in the army team, Felix Cortez as the major intelligence operator for the Cartel, and Ernesto Escobedo one of the most influential Cartel leaders.

As part of a foreshadowing of later events, Ritter is told by Clark of his plan to drastically curb the Cartel. His premonition that power, not drugs, will be the underlying motive for the Cartel is borne out immediately in the critical introspection by Escobedo.

The insight to the way Escobedo's mind works is very revelatory. Almost incidentally it explains the modus operandi of the killings on board the yacht Empire Builder and the reader comprehends who was behind the murders.

The reader is invited to compare the ethics of the original capitalists in America with this new breed of capitalists who are emerging in the drug trades. To say that the drug Cartel is more analogous to the Mafia is to ignore the many unethical deeds of the early robber kings. The recitation of the alliances made between the American government and various genocidal regimes is not all that persuasive either. Throughout this book various characters on both sides examine the motives and justifications for what they do

and there never is a clear answer for the reader. This "apologia" from Escobedo is one of many to follow.



Chapter 6, Deterrence

Chapter 6, Deterrence Summary

Felix Cortez is entering the United States on a Costa Rican passport using the name Diaz. As he walks to his Hertz rental car, he reminisces about his previous work in Puerto Rico with the Machetero and their attempt to overthrow the government there with Cuba's version of social realism. Later he picks up a list of prospective targets for his activity.

A few feet away at Dulles Airport, Dan Murray, Deputy Assistant Director of the FBI is leaving on a trip to Mobile, Alabama. He is going there to investigate the incident of the coast guard cutter Panache and the arrests made by its skipper Red Wegener. In the end Murray concludes that Wegener has built a solid case for the videotaped confessions without admitting the court martial enactment, and he has the backing of an extremely powerful US Senator.

Chapter 6, Deterrence Analysis

The developments on board the Panache and the ensuing investigation by the FBI appear to reach a satisfactory conclusion, though the mystery of the yacht owner and the motive for his death is still unknown to the reader. There is an oblique reference to the way the murders were carried in the introspection of Escobedo in the previous chapter.

The allusion to the unsuccessful coup by the Machetero in Puerto Rico could have been used as a substantiation for the identification of the Cartel as a threat to the national security, but the story concentrates on the universal revulsion of "druggies" as a justification for the covert operations.



Chapter 7, Knowns and UnKnowns

Chapter 7, Knowns and UnKnowns Summary

Dingo Chavez has been guessing about the mission, which his group will be conducting. The high altitude training rules out Panama, Cuba, and Nicaragua. He thinks that his group will be used to train other light fighters, but when the trainer flips the blanket off a submachine gun with a silencer, he knows that the mission is not about training.

Vice Admiral James Cutter and his Deputy Director of Operations, Ritter go over the details of Operation SHOWBOAT. It will start in three weeks. All the different components of the operation are insulated from knowledge of each other. Ritter insists that Cutter get written permission for the operation from the President. Instead, Cutter writes out a letter in long hand stating he has authorization from the President and gives it to Ritter warning him not to show it to anyone.

Under his alias of Juan Diaz, Cortez has made acquaintance with Moira Worth, secretary to the Director of the FBI. The affair has progressed enough for them to make love in his hotel room. He is saddened by his success because he admires Moira's courage and vitality and her need to replace the intimate companionship she lost when her husband died. However, he congratulates himself on penetrating the FBI organization at the highest level. A radiant Moira mentions nothing of all of this at her office next day, but her colleagues, boss and her children all guess and approve of the source of her newfound vitality.

Chapter 7, Knowns and UnKnowns Analysis

The arrangement whereby each element of the covert operation is insulated from knowledge of its adjoining counterpart is a classic technique in covert operations.

The maneuvering between the National Security Advisor, Cutter, and the DDO, Ritter is critical in the establishment of responsibility for operation SHOWBOAT and Cutter's failure to report details of the operation to the President. The President, of course, knows all about it, or thinks he does, as was described in the Prologue, but the reader has been made aware of the fact that its overall objective is political in nature, a prime concern in an election year.



Chapter 8, Deployment

Chapter 8, Deployment Summary

At the FBI offices in Director Jacobs's office, Bill Shaw and Dan Murray, discuss "the pirates" case. Murray is aware that there may be efforts to discredit the prosecution case because of the unconventional treatment of the prisoner by the Coast Guard.

In the Medellin offices of the Cartel in Colombia, Felix Cortez is reporting to Escobedo, the Cartel chieftain who has hired him. He forms an assessment of Escobedo as a man of action, capable of making decisions, unlike the men running the KGB and the American Intelligence organizations. He promises to find out what is behind the increase in disappearances of Cartel courier planes.

At CIA headquarters in Washington, National Security Advisor Admiral Cutter and DDO (Deputy Director of Operations) Bob Ritter are discussing the plans for two covert operations they are about to initiate against the Colombian drug trade. They agree to start the air operation called EAGLE EYE without informing the President, who is in California, as there are already intercepts coming in. The in-country operation, SHOWBOAT, will be started after the FBI Director has met with the Colombian Attorney General.

In Florida at the 1st Special Operations Wing at Eglin Air Force Base, Colonel Paul Jones, "PJ", is on a recovery operation. His fiefdom comprises half a dozen MH-53J "Pave Low III" helicopters. PJ holds the Medal of Honor from his service in Laos and is regarded as a true hero by his fellow officers. The helicopter is powered by a six-bladed, rotor-driven, two turbo diesels and has a crew of six, and it can carry up to forty combat equipped troops. The pilot and copilot wear helmets with low light goggles and have the option of using an autopilot-radar-computer system, which automatically performs low level hedge hops. After the successful operation "PJ" announces he is looking for volunteers for a special operation in a few days time.

The army team is being briefed as to their mission; it is to clandestinely observe Colombian landing strips and radio back to their contact when planes leave on drug delivery flights. They are given a night to think over the dangerous mission for which they are being asked to volunteer. Chavez does not realize how skillfully he and his comrades have been manipulated. Aware of the social problems caused by drugs, each man in the team has, at one time or another wanted to take down a drug dealer. In the ensuing discussion there is no consideration of the dangers, just of the opportunities of the mission.

On board an F-15C fighter off the Florida Coast, Jeff Winters, "Bronco," is directed to intercept a twin-engine Beech aircraft by instructions on his encrypted radio channel. When the pilot of the civilian aircraft refuses to obey his instructions he is instructed to shoot it down, which he does.



Chapter 8, Deployment Analysis

The description of the relationship between Cortez and the Cartel Chieftain Escobedo is developed further. Cortez is very accurate in his assessment of Escobedo as a man who is capable of instant action and decision. This foreshadows the assassination of the Director of the FBI and the ensuing catastrophic escalation of the covert operations and explains the basis for the murder aboard the yacht.

The exposition of the technical aspects of the helicopter and crew, which are to play a critical role in the action, is an important foundation in the developing story.

The description of the downing of the drug delivery Beech is important as a means to inform the reader of the very real threat to civilian aircraft from air force interdiction. There is no information on the decision process, which leads to this drastic action, except for the discussion between Cutter and Ritter at CIA headquarters. The personal motives of the fighter pilot "Bronco," stemming from the death of his mother at the hands of "druggies," scarcely seem adequate for what is neither a police enforcement or a regularly sanctioned air force action. By now, of course, the reader will have been inveigled into a suspension of ethical judgment about certain aspects of the story.



Chapter 9, Meeting Engagement

Chapter 9, Meeting Engagement Summary

In Escobedo's luxury apartment in Medellin, the Cartel chief and his intelligence advisor, Cortez, interview Larson about the disappearance of yet another courier plane. Escobedo and Cortez are satisfied that Larson has nothing to do with the disappearance. He will check the maintenance records of the Twin Beech, which has vanished, but as he points out flying low over the sea at night is dangerous business.

Captain Bronco Williams is reviewing the gun sight videotape recorded when he shot down the Twin Beech. The men from Washington with him are satisfied that only they and no one else know about the result of the interception. Bronco has no reservations about what he has done. It is to eliminate a threat to the national security. He simply wonders about the need for secrecy.

The forty-four men of operation SHOWBOAT leave Colorado and are transported to an old army base, Fort Kobbe, in Panama. Meanwhile the giant Pave-Low helicopter leaves Eglin Air Force Base in Florida and, with several in-flight refuels, arrives at the same field in Panama. Another component of the operation is put in place when a group of men and their equipment are landed at a small military site at Coreazal, near the Panama Canal, by helicopter from USS Guadalcanal. At Cape Canaveral, Florida, a Titan rocket blasts off to insert a communications satellite into a specially designed orbit.

In the jail in Mobile, Alabama, the convicted "Pirate" Ramon and Jesus are facing the death penalty and the electric chair. They offer to tell the authorities about many things, but their offer is rejected. Their lawyer, Edward Stuart, knows that the only chance to give them a reasonable defense is to impeach the credibility of the Coast Guard crew who arrested them.

Also in Mobile, Special Agent Mark Bright has made a breakthrough with the search of the house of the Yacht Owner. The team, after thirty-two days of searching, has located a skillfully concealed floor safe in which they found several computer disks. Eventually after hours and days spent breaking the encryption algorithm they reap a harvest of seven hundred pages of data outlining the disbursement and laundering of over seven hundred million dollars of Cartel money.

Out in the Gulf, Bronco Williams in his F-15 fighter jet intercepts a four-engine cargo plane, a DC-7B. The pilots on board claim to be an Air Carib cargo flight, but by judicious use of tracer bullets, Bronco shepherds the plane to a remote landing strip on the coast. When they land, the two pilots, Americans, are mentally harassed and then threatened with a summary execution by men who are, in fact, Recon Marines. Shortly afterwards they are taken to a special area of Eglin Air Force base, where they are arraigned by a U S Magistrate and detained in a specially built structure.



Chapter 9, Meeting Engagement Analysis

The exposition of the logistics operations is replete with the details of the various air delivery systems of the Army and Air Force. It is this sort of meticulous technical detail which is a major attraction in the writings of the author.

A different aspect of the story is dramatically delineated with the highly ethical treatment of the yacht pirates by their lawyer and his decision to try and find a means to discredit the crew of the Coast Guard cutter who made the arrest. The reader is left to wonder why the lawyer cares, given the nature of the crime which the two men have committed.

The review of the gun sight videotape of the downing of the intercepted Beech aircraft by men from Washington and their concern about it being detected implies an acknowledgment that the action was illegal. It contrasts sharply with the trouble taken to force the Douglas DC-7 to land and then to arraign the pilots before a US Magistrate in the US.

The arbitrary nature of the different treatment of the drug delivery intercepts is not explained to the reader who now feels invited to acquiesce in accepting the different fates of convicted murderers in Alabama, and unknown pilots of Beech Aircraft and Douglas DC-7 cargo planes.



Chapter 10, Dry Feet

Chapter 10, Dry Feet Summary

Mark Bright is in the office of the Director of the FBI, Emil Jacobs. He tells the director and Dan Murray the Bureau's expert on international arms and money how they found and decoded the computer disks in the office of the victim of the "Pirates" case and tells them the trove is worth about seven hundred million dollars. After overcoming their astonishment the group agrees on TARPON as a code word for the case. The President and the Attorney General will be informed immediately.

Moira Wolfe, the executive secretary to the FBI Director, goes to meet the man she knows as Julian Diaz for dinner, but instead of eating they quickly agree to go to his hotel, where they make passionate love. Cortez, as Julian Diaz, tells her the details of his fictional life as a South American businessman. He eventually discovers that Moira's boss is planning a trip to Colombia; it will be a weekend long trip, and he gives Moira a phone number to call when she knows it will happen, so that he can fly to Washington to spend the week end with her.

In Panama, Captain Ramirez and his men successfully complete an exercise in which they decisively outmaneuver a team of jungle-warfare instructors. Later at their base the men of operation SHOWBOAT are issued their equipment, arms, rations and medical supplies. All their ID's and dog tags are taken and placed in clear plastic bags to be left behind at the base. Then each of the five squads is trucked to the giant Pave-Low helicopter and loaded aboard. With Captain Johns at the control, it takes off following the normal route down the Panama Canal. When they cross the coastline they head out to sea and towards Colombia. Leaving the Colombian coastline they proceed overland in the mode called "dry feet" and go north of Tolu, avoiding detection by vehicles on the ground, and land at the designated landing zone.

Chapter 10, Dry Feet Analysis

The account of the precipitous development of Moira's affair with the fictional Julian Diaz is finely developed. However, there is no portrayal of genuine affection on her part; it appears that "her needs" are the primary motivation. On the part of Cortez, on the other hand, there is an undercurrent of genuine sympathy for the woman he is manipulating and whose intensity and newly-awakened passion he is exploiting. It comes as no surprise that Cortez finds Moira's sexual demands on him to be a physical challenge despite his self acknowledged prowess in this field.

The vivid description of the supposedly errant satellite unfolding its solar wings in space and beginning to communicate with a secret ground station in Arizona serves as a reminder of the enormous resources and coordination which have been brought in to play in the mounting of operation SHOWBOAT. This is equally true of the meticulous



planning and field craft of the soldiers on the ground and the technical skills of the helicopter crew who deliver them to their first landing zone in the Colombian jungle.

The fact that they have been stripped of their dog tags and all other identification adds an ominous note to the beginning of the in-country operation.



Chapter 11, In-Country

Chapter 11, In-Country Summary

In Medellin, Colonel Felix Cortez, formerly of the Cuban DGI informs Escobedo that he is not certain as to the details, but two of the Cartel's delivery planes are missing and two of Escobedo's men are in the hands of the Americans. The two men killed an American businessman, his wife, and children on board the businessman's yacht at sea.

On the ground in the Colombian jungle, Sergeant Ding Chavez is silently navigating his Special Forces group toward their checkpoint. When they safely arrive the radio operator sends a signal via a geosynchronous communications satellite to their control called VARIABLE, using the squad's code name of KNIFE.

In Washington at the office of the Director's secretary, Moira, is taking notes on operation TARPON as the Director, Emil Jacobs, dictates. There are about six-hundred million dollars of Cartel money, which has been traced and can be seized and he asks for five copies. The whole subject is code-word material he tells Moira and adds that his projected trip to Colombia will be a weekend trip and should not upset his schedule too much.

Jack Ryan, the Acting Deputy Director (Intelligence), discusses with Ritter and Judge Moore, the condition of his Director, Admiral James Greer, who is dying of cancer and who wants Jack Ryan to take over his job. When Ryan leaves the office, Ritter and Moore discuss the fact that Ryan has not been apprised of operation SHOWBOAT,; they agree to keep him away from involvement in what Operations is doing. They have a "go," a Presidential Finding, from the President and intend to get clearance from the authorized members in Congress under the "special and hazardous operations" (SAHO codicil).

In the Columbian jungle, after taking turns getting sleep during the hot humid day, the squad proceeds, with Chavez on point, towards their ultimate objective—a clandestine airfield used by the Colombian drug Cartel. As they approach the airfield, Chavez signals to the Captain that they are in luck; there is an aircraft on the field, its engines dead but still giving off radiation detectable in their night goggles.

Chapter 11, In-Country Analysis

The title of the Chapter "In Country" emphasizes the operations of the teams on the ground in Colombia. A lot of the content does indeed deal with the activities of these men and describes in detail what is like to be in action in the jungle. There will be very few readers who will have had first hand experience of this.

At the same time important developments are taking place in other strands of the story.



The leader of the Cartel is informed of the arrest of his men on the yacht and now the reader can draw his own conclusions about the underlying cause of the brutality of the murders.

In the FBI Director's office, the framework for Moira's weekend tryst is laid, and she becomes cognizant of the details of TARPON, which meshes with Cortez's promise to find out about the American Intelligence activities. TARPON confirms that Escobedo has no apprehension of the discovery of his money laundering activities, though he did arrange for the murder of the chief architect of the scheme. This is consistent with his impetuous and hotheaded methods of decision-making and action.

The decision to seek the death penalty in convicting the two murderers from the yacht and the refusal to accept confessions from the two Cartel operators is another piece in the emerging jigsaw puzzle of the story.

However the most significant development is the decision by Judge Moore and Deputy Director Operations (DDO) Ritter to keep Jack Ryan out of the loop concerning the SHOWBOAT operation. These two men develop their strategy to legalize the covert operations, which are already underway. They believe, or Ritter at least pretends to believe, that they have direct authorization from the President. Ritter chooses to forget that he only has a handwritten note from Admiral Cutter. Their discussion is an important exposition of the legal niceties of covert operations carried out by the President and his staff.



Chapter 12, The Curtain on SHOWBOAT

Chapter 12, The Curtain on SHOWBOAT Summary

The ground team report to their HQ called VARIABLE that a twin-engine aircraft is about to leave. When the pilots board the Piper Cheyenne and take off, the ground team reports the American registration number, the time of take off and the course it takes. The radio channels are working perfectly and Clark is monitoring the radio conversations from the communications center in Panama. Later on, the pilot of the F-15 forces the Piper Cheyenne to land at the airstrip, where the pilots are interrogated by the Recon. When they give up all they know, they are flown off to be processed by a Federal Judge in Florida.

Admiral Cutter and Directors Moore and Jacobs meet with the President in the Oval office. They discuss SHOWBOAT and tell him that it is underway with accounts of its initial successes. They also concur that Jack Ryan, who will replace the sick Admiral Greer, will not be informed of the clandestine operation. The dramatic results of operation TARPON are also discussed, and it is decided that the domestic and international seizure of the Cartel assets will begin under supervision of the Justice Department. Emil Jacobs details his forthcoming trip to Colombia and expresses his antipathy to operation SHOWBOAT. He urges the President to close the operation, and he points to the success of TARPON and says that legal, above board, police work can have just as dramatic results.

Jack Ryan is now Deputy Director of Intelligence at the CIA, filling in for Admiral Greer, who is slowly succumbing to cancer at the Bethesda Naval Hospital

Moira Worth finds out about the FBI Director's secret trip to Columbia on Tuesday but decides not to tell her lover Juan until Thursday and wonders what special place he will be taking her to in the Blue Ridge mountains.

The pilot of the intercepting F-15 fighter, Bronco, is bored with the ease with which the operation is unfolding. This time the aircraft he is intercepting is a Beech King Air. The aircraft makes the same evasive maneuver when challenged on the radio, diving down to just above the waves. Bronco decides to try a different tactic and approaches the low flying aircraft head on switching on his landing lights at the last moment. The Beech aircraft banks right and catch the waves with its wings and spectacularly cartwheels into the sea. Bronco is well satisfied with himself as he heads for his home base. With five kills to his credit, he is now officially an ace.

Chapter 12, The Curtain on SHOWBOAT Analysis

Apart from the description of the successful initiation of operation SHOWBOAT and the technical details of code message processing in the US government agencies in operation TARPON, the most significant part of this chapter is the meeting in the Oval



office of the main players at the head of the covert interdiction against the Colombian drug Cartel.

Here the President is shown to be aware of such details of the operation as the satellite communications channel. When Cutter criticizes the Colombian authorities for not taking effective action against the drug Cartel, Emil Jacobs, the Director of the FBI comes to their defense. He dislikes Cutter intensely and thinks he is completely ignorant of the realities of the South American situation. The reader is left with the impression that Emil Jacob's disapproval of the SHOWBOAT operation is somehow linked to his dislike of Cutter, its chief architect.

Jacob's admits to himself that the Constitution grants the President plenipotentiary powers to use military force once it is determined that a threat exists to the nation's security. The legal precedents go back to Jefferson's presidency, but the political implications are a different matter, and the FBI Director essentially washes his hands of this aspect of the covert operation. However, he goes on record, in front of his colleagues, to advise the President to terminate the operation. Whether there is a genuine threat to national security, the "Clear and Present Danger" of the book's title is left for the reader to decide.

As it is, the actions of the F-15 fighter pilot graphically illustrate the end result of such self-deception. His brilliant piece of flying, which causes the crash of his next intercept and brings his count of kills up to five and therefore his designation of "Ace," ignores the fact that his trophies are all unarmed civilian aircraft. The reader can only wonder at what satisfaction this brings to Captain Bronco Winters.



Chapter 13, The Bloody Weekend

Chapter 13, The Bloody Weekend Summary

Moira Wolfe overcomes her self-consciousness about her late husband and her children's opinions and makes an international call to the offices of Diaz and Diaz. She talks to a woman called Consuela and leaves a message for Juan to call her. When he does, she arranges to meet him for the weekend tryst they have planned. They arrange to meet on Friday afternoon at the Washington airport. As soon as he is off the line, Cortez, who is in Medellin, goes to see Escobedo and tells him that the Director of the FBI will be arriving in Bogota on Friday afternoon.

Though the Cartel does not know it, their cellular phone messages are being monitored by a new sophisticated system put in place by the NSA and already specific names have been attached to most of the calls and voices. The monitored conversations, when identified, are passed to a code word destination called CAPER. As a result of one of these communications intercepts, Bill Ritter of the CIA knows that the Cartel is going to have a meeting about the new American tactics and that "their man" is traveling to Washington. He immediately sets up surveillance to try and identify Cortez when he arrives in Washington

In the White House press room the Attorney General briefs the press about operation TARPON and the seizure, both in the US and overseas, of more than half a billion of Cartel assets. The press conference is broadcast live by CNN, and in Medellin one of two men whose job it is to monitor the American media, picks up the phone and makes a call.

In another part of Medellin, the meeting that Escobedo has called to discuss the disappearance of the courier planes is now focused entirely on the CNN broadcast of the results of TARPON. When he tells the other Cartel members that the Director of the FBI will be in Bogota later that day, the Cartel chieftains quickly decide on action.

Emil Jacobs is met by the US Ambassador to Colombia, and there is an inordinate amount of security around the cavalcade of cars, which proceeds through a district called Palermo, where traffic makes the limousine slow down. The ambush comes with no warning. Four RPG-17D surplus Soviet anti-tank weapons are aimed at the limousine and their projectiles streak down on the vehicle from third floor windows on both sides of the street. The men in the limousine died instantly. The Kevlar body armor of the Ambassador's body guards are of little protection against projectiles designed to destroy tanks.

When the news of the assassinations reaches Washington, Dan Murray and Jack Ryan realize that there must have been a leak in security in Washington. At Camp David, the President calls a meeting with Admiral Cutter, Judge Moore, Bob Ritter and the Attorney General. When they all arrive he tells them that there is now an informal Presidential



Finding that the Drug Cartel has initiated an undeclared war against the United States. They will be treated like a hostile nation-state, and he will carry the fight to them as he would any other state-sponsored terrorists. He tells Ritter that he has a hunting license with no bag limit and that they must stay at Camp David and come up with a plan.

While the somber ceremonies of the returning victims at Washington are being played out, a police sergeant named Bernie Braden is cutting his lawn in suburban Mobile, Alabama. He has recently performed the task of searching the house of a local businessman for any incriminating evidence for people who paid him with cash. He always carries his Smith and Wesson revolver, even when cutting the lawn in front of his house, but that does not save him from the hail of machine gun bullets from a Chevy van on the street.

Dan Clark returns to Langley where he confers with his boss Ritter in the Operations Directorate. Ritter tells him that the president has given them a hunting license to exact retribution on the Cartel. Clark is experienced and knowledgeable about this type of operation and has already formulated the plan he outlined in St. Kitts. Clark is told that the in-country teams will be extracted that night but is dismayed to learn where they will be re-inserted.

Chapter 13, The Bloody Weekend Analysis

The decision to publicize the seizure of Cartel assets is a political one for which the President is quick to harvest the benefits. There is no discussion on the part of the Presidential advisors, or within the CIA, as to the possible further benefits to be derived from keeping the information in TARPON secret or the advantages of keeping the Cartel in the dark. The political advantages are immediately overshadowed by the assassination of the Director of the FBI and the American ambassador.

Cortez is unaware of the use, which the Cartel makes of the information he has given them about the movements of the FBI Director. If he had known about the announcement of TARPON, he might have been able to prevent the drastic reaction by Escobedo, though it is not clear that he would have succeeded. In any case, insulated from the rest of the world in the Blue Ridge Mountains, he does not learn about either TARPON or the deaths in Bogota until too late. This deliberate cutting himself off from outside distractions is unusual in an experienced operator such as Cortez. The reader is left to speculate that this is a form of self-indulgence with his tryst with Moira and a mistake of major proportions.

Again the reader cannot help noticing the similarities between the reaction of the Cartel chiefs and the President. Despite the solemn invocation of the threat against national security, the President acts as impulsively and emotionally as Escobedo, but in his case, because of the vast power and resources of the US Government, the results are potentially even more dangerous. It is only because the National Security Advisor sees it as an opportunity to further his own aims that the normal checks and balances of the US Government do not come into play to mitigate the situation. Specifically, the death of

Emil Jacobs, the sickness of Admiral Greer and the deliberate exclusion of Jack Ryan from knowledge of the operations result in a lack of restraint among the President's advisors.



Chapter 14, Snatch and Grab

Chapter 14, Snatch and Grab Summary

Moira Wolfe is idly daydreaming about a possible marriage to her lover Juan and even having the Director come to her wedding. Under Juan's persistent questions about the FBI Director she tells him about TARPON, which is now public knowledge. He shows no emotion until he contemplates the likely course Escobedo will take. Then a chill sweeps through him. Later Cortez disengages from her after unsuccessfully trying to make love. He realizes that he cannot telephone anyone and that his only recourse is to do nothing for the moment.

In the Colombian jungle, Captain Ramirez tells Chavez and Vega that the helicopter will be airlifting them out that night. They are to kill the two guards and booby trap the airstrip before leaving. At the helicopter base, PJ and the flight crew are also given orders to stand by and start making preparations for the extraction.

Moira feels she may have placed too many demands on her lover, and she has cut short her plans for the weekend. Felix Cortez has made it back to the airport after he has left Moira and is finally able to listen to a news broadcast. He immediately catches a plane to Atlanta, where he will be able to make connections. Moira, still basking in the glow from her weekend arrives at her home to be met by an agent from the Bureau, who tells her that Emil, her boss and the whole party with him were killed in Bogota. When the reality sets in her tears overwhelm her other recent feelings of contentment.

Chavez and his team successfully eliminate the guards at the airstrip and booby trap the fuel supplies but before they can withdraw, a truck arrives and men emerge and, puzzled by the lack of guards, inevitably they open the door of the hut and trigger the booby traps.

Captain Johns, has just successfully picked up the first team and sees the glow from the gasoline fire at the booby trapped airstrip, where the team gives up any idea of resetting the booby traps, dragging the bodies to the center of the runway. They are extremely worried that the newly-expected aircraft will see the giant helicopter but give the all clear and are picked up, taking the bodies with them. After they have refueled over the sea, Chavez helps the helicopter crewman push the incriminating bodies off the ramp.

In Medellin, Cortez is informed about the disappearance of the truck at Number 6 airstrip and is told to inspect all the airstrips. Moving by helicopter, he confirms the events at Number 6 airstrip and realizes that it was a military operation which had been carried out.



Chapter 14, Snatch and Grab Analysis

The removal of the in-country covert teams is only successful because of a lucky break, though given the dramatic way the extraction is carried out without any attempt at concealment, makes the concerns about the giant Pave-Lo helicopter being detected a little inconsistent. The reader is aware that there has been a drastic redirection to the SHOWBOAT operation but apart from the tie in with Clark's suggestion to Ritter on St. Kitts, the details are withheld. With both sides now escalating their reprisals, the role of the CIA senior field agent Dan Clarke becomes increasingly important. Exposition as to Dan Clark's background, his family, and the details of his service record and how he became recruited to the CIA is given through his visit to his family and through Ritter's conversations with Admiral Cutter.

Cortez, back in Colombia, has had not time to confront Escobedo with recriminations as to the rash action against the FBI Director. Chavez's bittersweet realization that he will never see Moira again indicates to the reader that a vulnerable chink has been found in the cold emotional armor of the intelligence professional.



Chapter 15, Deliverymen

Chapter 15, Deliverymen Summary

The carrier USS Ranger is preparing to leave San Diego for an extended battle group exercise to prepare the group for deployment in the Indian Ocean. The Commander Roy Jensen is visited by a Mr. Carlson eight hours before the carrier sails. He commands a squadron of Grumman A-6E Intruder medium attack bombers. The CO is given orders, which he agrees to carry out. They involve some special ordinance, painted blue, which are already aboard the supply ship Shasta. Clarkson tells him that he, himself, will be on the ground and that a civilian "tech rep" will come aboard to coordinate. The commander will be given eight hours notice. It is to be a "quiet operation" and the cover is that it is a Drop-Ex to evaluate a new weapon

In Mobile, Alabama, the police are still mourning the death of their fellow officer Braden and his wife who got caught in the hail of bullets, which had killed her husband. The search for the blue minivan has involved the police of Mississippi, Alabama, Florida, and Louisiana. When it is eventually found with a decomposing body in it, the detectives recognize the man as a "druggie."

Cortez, in Medellin, is finally confronting Escobedo, who is arrogantly confident that he has taught the "norteamericanos" a lesson. Cortez begins to form a plan to get rid of this overconfident, self taught smuggler.

At FBI headquarters, Bill Shaw, now the Bureau's senior official, discusses, with Dan Murray, the leak that most certainly came from within his organization and was made exactly four hours before Emil Jacobs took off for his final meeting in Colombia. He orders a subpoena to check all phone calls but does not expect much from it.

While Chavez and his fellow soldiers back at their originating base in Panama watch the burial ceremonies in Chicago, Larson is in Florida with Ritter. They are looking over the satellite images of possible drug processing plants southwest of Medellin. In San Diego, USS Ranger leaves port and enters the Pacific Ocean. In Bogota, Dan Clark leaves the airport, where he has just flown into from California and, on a nearby secondary road, is handed a twenty-pound package, part of which is a tripod.

On the way back from the funeral in Chicago, on board the VC-135 of the President's flight, Dan Murray hands Bill Shaw a fax he received on the flight from Washington. It identifies the source of the leak, which led to the assassination of Emil Jacobs as Moira Wolfe.

Chapter 15, Deliverymen Analysis

The arrangements for the "quiet operation" originating from the carrier USS Ranger is a further example of the power and authority behind the vastly expanded SHOWBOAT

operation. The reader may wonder about the lack of involvement of the other officers of the battle group. Presumably the flight operations observers will watch the deployment of the A6 attack bomber and will know its whereabouts. The dismissal of the problem with the injunction to find a "B/N" who can keep his mouth shut is a little of an oversimplification.

The straw that breaks the camel's back and plants the seed of rebellion against Escobedo in the mind of Felix Cortez is again Escobedo's complete lack of sensitivity about Moira Wolfe. The reader must begin to suspect that Cortez has finally succumbed to feelings of affection for the woman whom he has coldly used to further his aims. The contrast between the arrogance and brutality of Escobedo and the cool professionalism of his hired intelligence advisor further lead to a more sympathetic view of Felix Cortez.

The description of the details of the funeral flight and the ceremonies in Chicago provide a vivid backdrop to the tragedy of the revelation that Moira has been the source of the break in security. The conscious delay in revealing the news to his boss and the presence of the grieving and unaware Moira on the official plane make for a poignant scene.



Chapter 16, Target List

Chapter 16, Target List Summary

Dan Murray and Bill Shaw confront Moira about her denial of the security breach that led to the assassination of the FBI Director and his entourage. She admits she called an office in Venezuela and when they tell her that the office is in fact an apartment, she realizes she has been betrayed and cooperates fully. When Moira, filled with remorse and guilt at what she has done, goes home, she gets out her dead husband's sleeping pills and takes them all. Her teenage son finds her unconscious in the bedroom and calls the emergency services that take Moira to the emergency ward at the hospital. Dan Murray arrives at the Wolfe home in time to take Moira's children to the hospital and vows revenge on Cortez for causing this development.

The in-country team is inserted again in Colombia, this time in the mountains southwest of Medellin, where the drug processing sites are believed to be operating. As usual, they successfully avoid detection and start their operations in the high altitude jungles in the Risaralda province.

In Mobile, the police have found expensive camera equipment in the home of the slain policeman Braden. This connects Braden with the murder on the yacht

Stuart Bright, the defense attorney for the convicted pirates, Ramon and Jesus, has gone to the NCO club in Mobile where the crew of the Coast Guard Cutter Panache hangs out. Impersonating a navy man he succeeds in getting a crewmember to describe the simulated execution when the pirates were arrested. He is wired and presents the tape recording of the incriminating conversation to the Prosecuting lawyer Davidoff. He proposes a lenient sentence for his clients in exchange for not calling the coastguard crew to the trial.

Robby Jackson is about to fly out to the carrier Ranger to observe fleet exercises and listens to his younger brother complain about the sudden disappearance of his best sergeant, Dingo Chavez, and the curious fact that Chavez has been spotted in Panama.

Chapter 16, Target List Analysis

Dan Murray blames himself for not putting Moira Wolfe under detention, which would have prevented her from trying suicide, but he is really full of rage against Cortez, who he now knows engineered her unwitting betrayal of her boss, Emil Jacobs. Tracing Cortez's movements reveals to Dan Murray that he is dealing with a very proficient adversary. Apart from a few fingerprints, they still do not have any idea of what he looks like.

When Stuart Bright gets his incriminating record from the Panache crewmember, the reader is again reminded of the brutality of the murders on board the yacht and a similar



reaction is registered by the Mobile police, who, of course, have the convicted murderers in their custody. The defense attorney, Stuart Bright, obtained his evidence of the mock execution on board Panache, by impersonating a navy crewman. He acknowledges that in doing so, he, too, has committed a felony but the Attorney General, Davidoff does not take advantage of this weakness in the defense attorney's case.



Chapter 17, Execution

Chapter 17, Execution Summary

Captain Ramirez briefs the soldiers of KNIFE squad and explains the new parameters of their mission. After a night's rest the squad, with Sergeant Dingo Chavez on point, moves in on a drug processing plant in the jungle. They attack with precision and efficiency and kill fourteen men, some of whom returned fire with their AK-47's but many of the victims are simple peasants working at processing the drugs. After the successful action, Captain Ramirez begins to have misgivings about the purpose of the mission, but he leads his men back to their resting post with the bodies of the slain men gathered in a row at the now-destroyed processing plant and a claymore mine rigged to detonate when the first people come to the scene.

Commander Jackson is onboard the carrier Ranger. His mission is to observe the effectiveness of the Phoenix air-to-air missiles in the exercises. While inspecting the air-to-air missiles Jackson catches sight of some blue painted bombs, apparently some kind of non-metallic stealth weapons, which are rigged for guided delivery.

In Medellin the attacks on two processing plants and the deaths of thirty men causes speculation that FARC, the Colombian army, or MP-19 may be involved. The senior Cartel members call a meeting. The mobile phone message arranging the meeting is intercepted by the CAPER system and Ritter, at the CIA, immediately acts. He does not inform either Cutter or the President's office. After all, the President has given him a hunting license.

On the carrier, the tech rep goes to brief the CO of the A6 bomber, and in Colombia Dan Clark arranges with Larson for a reconnaissance flight down a valley south of Medellin.

Chapter 17, Execution Analysis

The description of the attack on the jungle processing plant is an exemplary account of the field craft involved in small unit raid. The fact that the squad has orders to kill all the people on the site does not unduly worry the soldiers in the squad, but their Captain is now having serious doubts about the objective of their mission. The transformation from covert observation of airstrips to downright killing of unarmed peasants leads to soul searching on the part of Ramirez. The reader, too, must begin to have the same doubts about the motive for the now transformed mission. There is no explanation of the authority or even identity of control VARIABLE and the readers finds themselves in the same predicament as the soldiers.

The account of the efficient but ruthless actions of the KNIFE squad, and the fact that they do not even attempt to take prisoners merely adds to the moral dilemma that faces all members of the squad.



Chapter 18, Force Majeure

Chapter 18, Force Majeure Summary

Admiral Cutter gives Ritter the go ahead on bombing the house where the Cartel senior members are scheduled to meet. On the ground, Clark and Larson set up the Ground Laser Designation unit (GLD) and on the aircraft carrier Ranger in the Pacific, an A6-E intruder bomber is armed with one of the blue bombs takes off as part of the fleet exercise. Robby Jackson, observing the exercise from the airborne early warning E-2C aircraft watches the A6 fly out of the radar range toward the South American mainland.

The A6 enters Colombian airspace and assumes the identity of a civilian aircraft en route from Quito to Los Angeles, but when he is out of range of the Colombian radar, the pilot flies towards the real target and contacts Clark on the ground, who lights the target, a large truck outside the meeting place, with the GLD and informs the pilot of the A6. Just before the smart stealth bomb flies into the target, from an altitude of thirty thousand feet, Felix Cortez belatedly approaches the meeting place in his BMW. The explosion from the smart bomb is tremendous, and Clark, who is recording the event from a relay through the GLD sights, is nearly overwhelmed by the force of the explosion. He reports to the pilot on the success of the operation before he and Larson leave the scene with their twenty pounds of equipment.

Felix Cortez only just escapes from the explosion, though his BMW is overturned. His immediate reaction is that the explosion came from a car bomb, though he still thinks the CIA is behind the explosion. He retrieves his cellular phone and makes a call, which is intercepted by CAPER.

The ground soldiers are dealing with another processing site but it goes wrong when the men working at the drug refinement accidentally stumble on the KNIFE team. In the ensuing firefight, one of the team members, Rocha, is killed, and two men from the processing team escape.

Chapter 18, Force Majeure Analysis

The description of the operations on board the Air Craft Carrier Ranger is as meticulous and authentic as the reader, by now, expects. The sub plot of Rob Larsen observing the A6 Intruder and the related inquiries by Chavez's former army colleagues including Jackson's younger brother, unfolds with no indication as to its significance.

Successful interception of cellular phone traffic in Colombia now becomes a critical factor in the CIA operations. The fact that this intelligence comes from routine civilian operations reinforces the argument, made to the President by the late Emil Jacobs, when he proposed that the covert operations be canceled in favor of routine, above board, police operations.



Chapter 19, Fallout

Chapter 19, Fallout Summary

American television news reports on the explosion, which destroyed the house of Esteban Unitveros, who had been a major figure in the Medellin Cartel. The television report includes pictures of the Unitveros children who were killed by the blast. At his NATO conference in Belgium, Jack Ryan comforts himself with the thought that it was a car bomb and therefore not an action by the CIA. On board USS Ranger, Robby Jackson suddenly puts two and two together with all he has seen while on the carrier, and his younger brother at the 7th Division also realizes where all those Spanish-speaking sergeants are deployed.

In the White House, the President is seriously embarrassed by the TV images of the collateral damage of the bomb and the high moral ground taken by his main political rival, Senator Fowler. The President emphatically denies to the press any US involvement in the strike and tells his National Security advisor that Congress will not be informed.

Admiral Cutter persuades the President not to call off the operations now that some tangible results are being achieved. Cutter says he will leak to the press that the Cartel members are attacking each other because of the fallout from the assassination of the FBI Director.

Ritter, reviewing the tapes sent back by Clark, realizes that they have caught an image of Felix Cortez arriving just before the explosion and just after it. He realizes that Felix Cortez was probably not involved with the killing of the FBI Director and might even regard that action as of one of emotion rather than reason.

In Mobile, Alabama, the word is out on the street that the two yacht murderers are going to get a plea bargain. The outraged local police decide to do something about it.

Chapter 19, Fallout Analysis

Most people in the international community already assume that the bomb, whether it was a car bomb or not, was the work of the Americans and, they, like many people in the US, fully approve. Instead of, unofficially, accepting responsibility, the President gets embroiled in the domestic political issues and digs himself a deep hole from which it is difficult to see how he can gracefully escape. What might have been a genuine threat to the security of the nation, the "Clear and Present Danger" of the title now dissolves into a domestic political scandal.

Jack Ryan, now taking over from Admiral Greer as a CIA Director of Intelligence, has been deliberately excluded from the covert operations, but now he realizes he needs to assert his authority over the CIA agency.



Chapter 20, Discoveries

Chapter 20, Discoveries Summary

Felix Cortez deduces that there are several covert groups in action; they are either American or American trained mercenaries and are probably supplied by helicopter from bases in Panama. In addition, he has deduced from Colombian lab reports that the explosion at the home of Unitveros was from an aerially delivered smart bomb. He realizes that the Americans are following a strategy which will have identical results with his own, personal plans. He makes two phone calls, unaware that the Cartel communications are being monitored by the CAPER operation.

In a CIA safe house on the outskirts of Bogota, Colombia, John T. Clark ponders his next move. He has worked for the agency since his time as a freelance operator when he left the Navy SEALs. There his nickname had been "Snake," and his particular expertise was killing. For twenty years now he has worked for the agency where his unique skills are still occasionally needed. Clark's plan is to eliminate enough people on his list of Cartel chieftains to induce paranoia in them and start the equivalent of the Mafia wars of the 1930's when they would turn on themselves.

In Mobile, Alabama, a senior police lieutenant is making a proposition to Henry and Harvey Patterson, twins, professional criminals and now under arrest for the murder of a pimp who had been assaulting two women with whom they had simultaneously fallen in love. They are being offered freedom for taking care of the "Pirates," Ramon and Jesus, who had raped and murdered an American woman and her kids and had connections to the daylight assassination of a Mobile police officer. They agree and the police officer sets in motion a series of events, assuming that the Patterson twins will uphold their end of the bargain.

In Washington, Dan Murray has received the enhanced photograph of the mystery man at the Unitveros bombsite. He goes to the hospital bed where Moira Wolfe is recovering from her failed suicide attempt, and she identifies the man in the photograph as her Juan Diaz. He tells her that the man in question is Colonel Felix Cortez formerly with the DGI of Cuba.

Chapter 20, Discoveries Analysis

The different threads of the unfolding action range from the Cartel's HQ in Medellin, Colombia, to a prison in Mobile, Alabama, to the Combat Information Center on the US Carrier Ranger. The most important thread of all, however, is the CIA safe house in Bogota, where the reader is finally given a detailed portrayal of John T. Clark of the CIA. His role in the ensuing action is of major importance to the story.

The matter of fact way in which the local authorities in Mobile, Alabama, arrange for the elimination of the "Pirates" Ramon and Jesus is in stark contrast to the agonizing self

analysis carried out by various senior officials in Washington as they go about an equally unethical course of action.



Chapter 21, Explanations

Chapter 21, Explanations Summary

Felix Cortez reports to Escobedo that he thinks there are several military groups in the field attacking the processing plants. He also suggests that other members of the Cartel planted the supposed car bomb at the Unitveros house. Escobedo's paranoia is now thoroughly inflamed, and Cortez suggests Escobedo can ask Fuentes whom they are going to meet, about it.

On the way to the meeting, Escobedo's armored Mercedes, with Cortez and Escobedo in it, survives an ambush, which destroys the two accompanying BMWs. Cortez, who apparently arranged the ambush, impresses Escobedo with his quick thinking, and Escobedo is grateful to him for saving his life. They find a high spot above the house where they were scheduled to meet Fuentes to see if there is any activity, which would indicate that their host had been expecting them to be ambushed. As they are looking on, another smart bomb, guided by the GLD manipulated by Clark and Larson, strikes the house and destroys it.

Returning from the carrier USS Ranger, Commander Robby Larson meets up with his younger brother at his house near Fort Ord. His younger brother has worked out that Sergeant Chavez and the other Hispanic soldiers who disappeared are on a covert mission in Colombia. Robby tells his brother to clam up about what he has deduced; he realizes that the security on a black operation is leaking like a sieve, with "ordies" on carriers and NCOs all over the army talking about it.

Jack Ryan, back from his NATO conference in Belgium, is confronted by the President's chief political rival, Bob Fowler, Governor of Ohio. The meeting goes poorly, and Jack Ryan is frustrated by the fact that he cannot penetrate the Governor's holier-than-thou attitude.

Chapter 21, Explanations Analysis

The major scene between Cortez and Escobedo could help the reader with a little exposition as to the significance of Cortez's withholding the information about the smart bomb and the details of the ambush. The reader has to pay careful attention to some adjectival clauses, buried among a mass of technical details of armor plating and weaponry, to conclude that Cortez has risked his own life in an ambush he has organized himself.

The justification of Jack Ryan's attitude towards hiding facts from the media, in the form of accounts of he and his family's confrontation with physical dangers, does seem a little strident. Governor Fowler makes a good point when he tells Ryan that he and his colleagues do, in fact, determine or contribute to national policies.



Chapter 22, Disclosures

Chapter 22, Disclosures Summary

Commander Robby Jackson makes a special point of running into Vice Admiral Joshua Painter at the San Jose Airport in California. When they have exchanged social pleasantries, Robby tells the Vice Admiral that he knows he is not cleared for it, but he is knowledgeable about the smart bombs being used to take out Colombia drug chieftains and personally observed that they came from an A-6 Intruder Bomber from the USS Ranger.

The very angry Vice Admiral tells Commander Jackson to fly immediately to Washington DC and tell Jackson's contact in the agency that there is going to be a lot of trouble with an operation imposed from above and bypassing the regular chain of command. In Washington, Robby Jackson pays another social call, this time on Jack Ryan the Director of Intelligence at the CIA. He confronts Ryan with the fact that Admiral Painter is enraged that the agency is using naval assets without coordinating with them. Jack Ryan tells Robby Jackson he knows nothing about the operation but says he is definitely going to find out and that the Admiral should lay low until he gets back to him.

In Mobile, Alabama, the "Pirates Case" is now heading for a courtroom showdown with the Coast Guard crew in serious jeopardy as the defense attorney tries to impeach their evidence. Dan Murray of the FBI, when he hears of this, tells his staff to warn the crew of the Panache. In the jail in Mobile, the Patterson brothers are getting their shanks ready for what they have agreed to do.

Felix Cortez supervises the start of the Cartel ground operations against the covert military forces, which are attacking the Cartel drug processing sites. He watches as five groups of fifty men each enter the jungle. They will communicate by radio with Cortez in a local farmhouse and each group has its own assigned operational area. Chavez and his team detect the gathering of forces against them and pass the message to VARIABLE.

Chapter 22, Disclosures Analysis

The news of the covert operations finally reaches Jack Ryan. The decision by Commander Robby Jackson to be the whistle blower is not very well developed. His encounter with Vice Admiral is rather drawn out and the reference to the Red October story is simply a distraction to the reader. It is noteworthy that none of these officers take the precaution of noting down, in writing, what they are doing or discussing.

The technique of jumping back and forward between different scenes is not that effective in expanding the story of the Pirates. Each group involved seems to have their own say and justification for what is going on and their part in it. As usual in this story the invocation of ingrained moral outrage against "druggies" is repeated.



Chapter 23, The Games Begin

Chapter 23, The Games Begin Summary

Ramon and Jesu, the two pirates who committed such brutal murders on board the yacht are mysteriously stabbed to death in the jail in Mobile, Alabama. The Patterson brothers are among the convicts in the showers at the time the double stabbing takes place, but there is no reliable account as to what happened. The break in and robbery of a police car, in Mobile, leads to the disappearance of the evidence which would incriminate the Patterson brothers in their own murder case.

Jack Ryan confronts his senior and fellow Directors at the CIA about their role in Colombia. He suddenly realizes the implications when Judge Moore assures him that the Agency has not used car bombs in Colombia. He now knows that this is a deliberate partial truth designed to cover up the agency's role in the use of smart bombs delivered from Naval aircraft. When he visits the dying Admiral Greer, he is told by an impassioned but weakened patient that he must remember the oath he took when he was made a Marine lieutenant and that principles are of the utmost importance.

Things are not going well with the in-country operation in Colombia. There has been action between the Cartel soldiers and the American forces. The BANNER team has lost their officer and four other men in a firefight and Chavez and his men have also been detected. In Panama, the Pave-Low helicopter is experiencing engine problems and out in the Atlantic the first hurricane, called Adele, is forming.

Chapter 23, The Games Begin Analysis

The machinations of the various lawyers involved in the demise of the pirates contrasts sharply with the morally-elevated, self-justifications of the senior CIA officers. Perhaps, not on the part of Jack Ryan, but certainly there are elements of hypocrisy in their following the letter of the law so exactly.

The reader might also echo Cortez's reaction when he discovers that the Americans are relying on a single helicopter to support their ground troops in spite of previously well-publicized operational failures. As the chapter ends, the inevitable engine failure at the base in Panama presages the impending disaster for the in-country army squads.



Chapter 24, Ground Rules

Chapter 24, Ground Rules Summary

Team KNIFE has met up with the remnants of the BANNER team, Chavez realizes they will have to fight, but Captain Ramirez is still trying to avoid detection. Clark and Larson are on the road in the area but don't have any radios with which to contact the ground teams. Clark kills three Cartel soldiers when they stop him and Larson. He sets fire to the soldiers' truck, and he and Larson use Larson's plane to leave Colombia and catch a ride from the US base in Panama to Washington D.C.

Using the safe combinations he has found in Admiral Greer's office, Jack Ryan photocopies all the files on the covert operations being run by Ritter. After studying the copies most of the night, he goes to his friend Dan Murray in the FBI for help. A team, or loop is formed, without the knowledge of their superiors in either the FBI or the CIA.

Admiral Cutter is informing the President of the losses incurred by the army teams. The President is extremely agitated and demands that Cutter shut down the covert operations immediately. He does not care how or where, just that it be done immediately.

In Medellin, Felix Cortez, has a brilliant idea and sends a fax to a secret number in Washington. The recipient reads the fax and is greatly shocked by what he sees.

Clark arrives in the office of the Deputy Director of Operations at Langley and remonstrates with him on the need to shut down SHOWBOAT immediately and extract the ground troops. Ritter says he will have to get permission but adds that they have a lead on the identity of Cortez, and they would like to spirit him out of Colombia.

The surveillance loop set up by Jack Ryan and Dan Murray produces a first lead, one of the targets is on the move, by way of Andrews Air Force base.

Chapter 24, Ground Rules Analysis

In Jack Ryan's mind, the fact that he has been instructed to lie to Congress is all he needs to know and to cast the cloak of illegality over all the covert operations. He and Dan Murray's ability to quickly put into place a surveillance team, without the knowledge of the senior officials in either the FBI or the CIA, indicates a freemasonry type fraternity among the rank and file. The reader might wonder why this was not availed of before.

By not identifying the recipient of Cortez's message to Washington and the deliberate withholding of the identity of the person of interest to the surveillance team, the author fabricates a sense of suspense in the reader, though at the expense of the latter having to back track a little to see if indeed s/he has not missed something



Chapter 25, The Odyssey File

Chapter 25, The Odyssey File Summary

The FBI/CIA surveillance team learns that their target is on his way to Panama in a small jet. They quickly label their operation ODYSSEY and arrange for special agent Bright to get a ride in a jet from the Air Guard. The F15-E jet goes supersonic, and Bright arrives ninety minutes ahead of his quarry. He is equipped with a Nikon camera and a 1000 mm telephoto lens. The subject emerging from the executive jet is Admiral Cutter. Bright and the local team follow him when he leaves his luxury hotel and enters a certain house in Panama City. Bright and the US legal secretary find a spot overlooking the garden in the house and watch while Cutter and Felix Cortez have a meeting in the garden. After the meeting, Cutter returns to his hotel. The next day he visits the Pave-Low helicopter operation at Howard Air Force base and the communications shack near the Gaillard Cut. At both locations he issues orders to cease operations immediately and for the men and equipment to return stateside.

At the Bethesda hospital Jack Ryan arrives too late the talk to the Admiral who died a short while previously. At the deceased Admiral's bedside, Ryan meets Dan Clark and they find out how they were both recruited by Greer and how they have both crossed paths in operations in different parts of the world.

In the Colombia jungle, the ground troops are going to make their way past a large group of Cartel forces, to a landing zone where Captain Ramirez has requested extraction. VARIABLE acknowledges the request but says there will be a delay.

In Washington Dan Murray and Jack Ryan examine the photographs, obtained by Bright, of the meeting between Cutter and Cortez and particularly the one of the two men shaking hands. It is of course only legally significant if they know what was being discussed.

Chapter 25, The Odyssey File Analysis

The technique of withholding key information from the reader to be gradually revealed in the course of the account is effective but would be more considerate of the reader if it were presented in a more direct manner. The revelation that the surveillance subject is Admiral Cutter is presented casually in the middle of a paragraph. Given the foreshadowing of the previous chapter and of previous paragraphs, it amounts almost to literary sleight of hand or author intrusion.

Likewise the meeting with Cortez, the agents now "could have guessed" the house that Cutter goes to but the reader is deliberately not informed. The reader is then told the identity of the other man, but the agents do not know who he is. Fortunately the content of the conversation is given to the reader.



The description of the flight of the F15-E can be considered a digression unless the authentic exposition of things military is the main attraction for the reader.

The character and demise of Admiral Greer seem to serve mainly as convenient devices for the story. Apparently he has no family or personal friends at his bedside when he finally succumbs.



Chapter 26, Instruments of State

Chapter 26, Instruments of State Summary

The National Security Advisor goes to CIA headquarters and tells Deputy Director Operations, Ritter, that he has met with Cortez; the operation is falling apart and that he, Cutter, is ordering him to shut down everything and destroy all files except for CAPER, which they should keep and restore to a normal. He then asks Ritter for the operations map for SHOWBOAT saying that he will make his own arrangements for the extraction of the ground troops. After a heated shouting match, Ritter caves in and follows his orders. Either that or he will face Congress, the courts and prison.

Clark and Larson are back in Colombia when he gets a coded message telling him that SHOWBOAT is being shut down. He and Larson go to the communications shack, and Clark intimidates the senior communicator into giving him the single side band frequencies of the radios being used by the ground teams. The satellite communications link was shut down under Admiral Cutter's orders.

In Colombia Cortez receives an encrypted message from Washington; within a minute he is marking SHOWBOAT sites on his map. He relays the locations to his hunter teams in the jungle.

Jack Ryan, Dan Murray and Robby Jackson meet in a deli and discuss what they can do to avert the destruction of the ground troops in operation SHOWBOAT. Ryan cuts through the legal wrangling and the upshot is that he and Murray fly to Florida in two planes of Commander Jackson's wing. They confront Colonel Paul Jones, the commander of the helicopter wing, which has been withdrawn from support of the in-country troops. After telling PJ all they know he, he agrees on their plan. Murray and Ryan fly as supernumerary crew in the giant helicopter and it lands on the helipad of the Coast Guard Cutter Panache as it patrols off the Yucatan peninsula.

Chapter 26, Instruments of State Analysis

The meeting between Cutter and Ritter is a critical scene in the unfolding of the story. The reader might wonder at the acceptance by Ritter of the outrageous orders of the National Security Advisor. After all he does have the handwritten memorandum which he extracted from Cutter, presumably to use in an event such as this.

Likewise the discussions of the legal niceties of their intentions in the discussion between the acting head of the FBI, Dan Murray, and Jack Ryan is of interest to the reader to outline the murky depths of constitutional law, but it is Jack Ryan who displays the necessary leadership in mounting the rescue operation.



Chapter 27, The Battle of Ninja Hill

Chapter 27, The Battle of Ninja Hill Summary

The Pave-Low helicopter returns to its base in Panama, and Clark is there to meet Jack Ryan. Everyone, including the helicopter crew, is now aware of the growing threat from hurricane Adele. Clark tells Ryan he and Larson are going to fly down to the operations area in Colombia and try to contact the teams from a low flying fixed wing aircraft which has been fitted with long range tanks.

Clark and Larson, after a good deal of trouble establish contact with two of the in-country teams and direct them to new landing zones. Team KNIFE, unfortunately is surrounded by an overwhelming force of enemy soldiers and in the ensuing firefight every one is killed except Chavez, Leon, and Vega. They are contacted by Clark on the SSB who tells Chavez to follow the route he took when they last met on the training exercise, and he (Clark) will extract him tomorrow.

Back at the helicopter base, Clark shows the pick-up sites on the map to the Pave-Low crew. He says he will go in on the ground tomorrow night and try to rescue the survivors from KNIFE. Ryan and Johnson will augment the helicopter crew when they fly in tomorrow night in the expected near hurricane conditions.

In Washington, special agents have found a computer disk in the domestic garbage from Cutter's home. Specialists start trying to recover the data on it.

Chapter 27, The Battle of Ninja Hill Analysis

The account of the battle of Ninja Hill and the tragic overrunning of the KNIFE team is graphic and realistic. This incident is evocative of many such firefights which have occurred in similar terrain in other theaters.

The fortuitous presence of the Panache cutter with a helipad, which can take the Pave-Low aircraft, is convincingly portrayed and the addition of Jack Ryan as a substitute gunner on the helicopter inserts one of the main characters in the story into the actual combat operations.

The importance of the contents of the partially-erased computer disk from the domestic garbage from Cutters home is not fully explained, though the mechanics of its data recovery are explained in detail.



Chapter 28, Accounting

Chapter 28, Accounting Summary

Jack Ryan is noticeably absent from the funeral of Admiral Greer. DDO, Bob Ritter and the Director of the CIA, Judge Moore come to the realization that Ryan knows about the covert operations and is off doing something about it. They go to Greer's office to see what files he had on hand and then to Ryan's office where they try and open his safe, but he has changed the combination without telling them. They find out that Ryan is back in Panama and the Pave-Low helicopter is back in operation. They send a signal to Ryan telling him they cannot bring back the satellite link but give him official approval for whatever he deems necessary.

Clark and Larson land back in Panama and borrow a Volkswagen Microvan. They scout around the village of Anserma where Cortez is running the ground operations. Finally they get in contact with Chavez and the remnants of the KNIFE and BANNER teams. Clark improvises a plan to snatch Cortez and persuades the ground troops to join him. When they get to the house where Cortez is, they find he is having a meeting with Escobedo and there are a large number of men guarding the house. Again Clark improvises and has the Pave-Low helicopter land the teams they have picked up. They mount an operation using these troops and the firepower of the helicopter to destroy the guards and seize Cortez and Escobedo. Clark is persuaded not to toss Escobedo out of the helicopter, and they head back for their last pick up.

Chapter 28, Accounting Analysis

It is only when Ritter and Judge Moore have no other option that they choose to support Jack Ryan and his team. Ryan's independence, initiative, and courage are the major turning point in the story. Clark's genius and ruthlessness in field operations turns the disaster of the SHOWBOAT operation into a triumph. He also manages to satisfy his own honor by extracting the ground troops who have been abandoned by their superiors.

At the funeral of Admiral Greer the reader learns, a little belatedly, a few details of his personal life and the reason he has so few close personal friends.



Chapter 29, Fill-Ups

Chapter 29, Fill-Ups Summary

Ever since the President warned him to check that his closing down of the covert operations is going all right, Admiral Cutter has been suspicious that something is wrong. He gets a curiously detached response from DDO Ritter and decides to fly, first to Florida and then to Howard AFB in Panama, where he eventually discovers that the CO is off base with his wing.

In Colombia, the Pave-Low helicopter is making the last pick up when it comes under heavy fire from a large number of ground forces. Colonel Johns executes a "hot" pick up, and Jack Ryan, filling in on the port mini gun, does sterling work suppressing the rifle fire which is raking the helicopter. With power failing on one of its engines, the Pave-Low is guided to a Shell refueling station by Larson in his Beech. The helicopter is refueled. Clark replaces the wounded soldier in Larson's aircraft with a bound Escobedo, and he and Larson take off for Medellin while the Helicopter, now on half power, performs a daring landing on the deck of the Coast Guard cutter Panache. When Clark and Larson land in Medellin, they deliver Escobedo to the Cartel guards having told them he was trying to leave the country in suspicious circumstances. Then Clark tells Larson to fly to Panama and Guantanamo.

When the Hercules refueling tanker returns to Howard, Cutter finds out that Colonel Johns has successfully extracted the remnants of the ground forces but may be lost in the hurricane.

Chapter 29, Fill-Ups Analysis

The depiction of the "Hot" jungle pick up and the almost impossible landing of the giant Pave-Low helicopter on the deck of the Panache in the eye of the hurricane are masterpieces of action writing. Through Jack Ryan's Point Of View, the reader is given a vicarious, but entirely realistic experience, of what it is like to be a helicopter gunner in a firefight.

It is through Jack Ryan's insistence on following the rules that Clark is persuaded not to summarily execute Escobedo, and his solution to the dilemma as to what to do with him is as ingenious as it is a case of poetic justice.

When a female pilot of the Hercules at Howard AFB defies Cutter, he must realize that he is dealing with something more than just a botched op field operation.



Chapter 30, The Good of the Service

Chapter 30, The Good of the Service Summary

The cutter Panache requests sanctuary from the hurricane at the Guantanamo Base in Cuba. On the way there, Murray and Ryan take a videotape machine and talk to Cortez, who he cooperates freely when he is promised that he will not be prosecuted. The helicopter and Larson's plane are hidden from prying eyes on the base.

In Washington Vice Admiral Cutter believes he has emerged unscathed from the events of the previous week and is contemplating his next promotion when a man who claims to be his briefing officer visits him. The man shows him a videotape and a photograph of him shaking hands with Cortez. He tells him that the Deputy Director of the FBI is at that very moment arranging for a warrant for his arrest. He then leaves. A short while later the FBI agent on watch over Cutter sees him go on his regular morning jog, but this day he unaccountably falls under a bus and is killed instantly.

When the President returns to the White House for the funeral of his National Security Advisor Cutter, Jack Ryan and two congressmen from the House Select Committee on Intelligence request to see him. In the ensuing confrontation, Ryan tells the President that he will be informing members of Congress about the covert operations, and they are there to witness that Ryan has so been informed the President. Ryan is asked to leave the Oval office, and the two congressmen confer with the President for an hour. Later in the office of the Director of the CIA, the congressmen tell Judge Moore that the rescue of the ground troops was an action that they fully approved of and that they are satisfied that no further publicity about the covert operations is necessary.

On the day after the presidential Election, which Fowler wins by a small margin, Dan Murray goes with Moira Wolfe to Guantanamo, and they watch as Felix Cortez is repatriated to Cuba. Felix Cortez shrinks at the expression in her eyes but then, as he is delivered to the Cuban guards tells himself that the greatest passion of all is silence.

Chapter 30, The Good of the Service Analysis

The confrontation between Clark and Cutter and the latter's subsequent suicide may seem a little contrived to the reader. The corresponding confrontation between Ryan and the President allows the reader to be cognizant of the President's deliberate distancing himself from the actions he has set in motion. It is the main passage in the book where the President is held accountable for his actions even though he has insulated himself from overt responsibilities. Finally, by way of the discussions between the congressmen and the Director of the CIA, the reader is informed of the true ethical principles involved in the covert operations and the difficulty of drawing lines between different courses of action. It is reassuring to find, at least as far as this story goes that the checks and balances of the US government finally come into play.

In this the final chapter of the book, the future destinies and careers of the main players in the action are swiftly disposed of including the most poignant of all when Moira Wolfe witnesses the "repatriation" of her former lover.



Characters

Jack Ryan

Jack Ryan was educated at Boston College and recruited to the CIA by Admiral Greer, who is at Bethesda Hospital mortally ill from pancreatic cancer. Ryan is designated to represent Admiral Greer in his absence. Ryan's area of expertise is the KGB and Central Europe.

Admiral Greer is something of a father figure to Ryan, replacing his own father who had died in a plane crash in Chicago, a person to whom Ryan has come many times for advice and guidance. Ryan has only been with the CIA for six years. Now at the age of forty he is delegated to replace his old boss Admiral Greer in one of the most important Intelligence positions in the US government.

Ryan has made his money in the brokerage business and does not need the salary he gets from the CIA. He has gotten himself a Ph D, written books, and taught history. Jack Ryan's wife, Cathy, is an ophthalmic surgeon to supplement her associate professorship at Johns Hopkins.

Ritter and Judge Moore deliberately keep Jack Ryan out of the need to know loop on the covert operations, and Ryan is not invited to Camp David when Director Jacobs is assassinated in Bogota.

When Jack Ryan visits Admiral Greer in the hospital, the Admiral tells him that Jack is cleared for everything; he has to know everything, and it is his duty to inform Congress. On the subject of covert CIA operations, which he is being prevented from learning about, Jack Ryan eventually takes matters into his own hands and, using the safe combinations he finds in Greer's office, he copies the covert operations files in Bob Ritter's safe, carefully covering his tracks. When he understands the extent of the deception being practiced by the CIA, he goes to Dan Murray in the FBI and they set up an operation to put surveillance on the main players in the operation.

It is Jack Ryan's unilateral action, cutting through all the legal niceties, which are placed in his way, to mount a rescue operation for the abandoned ground troops in Colombia that finally causes Judge Moore and Bob Ritter to recover their consciences and act in defiance of Admiral Cutter.

During the rescue operation, Ryan is co-opted into the crew of the Pave Low helicopter and shows his true mettle when he mans one of the machine guns in the firefight during the "hot" extraction. Back in Washington he confronts the President with members of the House Oversight Committee and forces him to come clean with members of the Congress.

In all of this, Jack Ryan displays the personal integrity and initiative which belie his youth and firmly establish him in the ranks of the CIA.



Felix Cortez

Felix Cortez has been hired by the Cartel leader Escobedo to be his main intelligence officer. His background is that he was trained in the Moscow Center in Cuba. Before he switched his allegiance to the drug cartel, he had participated in the abortive coup attempt in Puerto Rico when the Macheteros tried to seize power and install a Castro dominated socialistic state. He prides himself on his professionalism and only rarely participates in the brutal interrogations carried out by the Cartel soldiers. In one incident, he deliberately injects morphine in a captured US soldier to end his sufferings.

Cortez is a specialist in subverting people in opposing organizations and one of his main triumphs is the seduction of Moira Wolfe. As the story unfolds it is obvious that, despite his cold professionalism, he harbors feelings for the woman he is exploiting. He is appalled by the assassination of the US FBI Director in Bogota and begins to plan the overthrow of Escobedo when he returns to Colombia.

Cortez comes to despise his powerful and brutal Cartel boss, Escobedo, and risks his own life in an arranged assassination attempt on Escobedo when he, himself, is accompanying the Cartel chief. His professional analysis leads to his deduction that a smart bomb was used to destroy the house of Unitveros and it gives him the idea to encourage internecine vendettas among the Cartel leaders, which, of course, is the same idea of Dan Clark of the CIA.

Perhaps his most dramatic moment is when he meets with the National Security Advisor, Admiral Cutter, and persuades him to abandon the US troops on the ground in Colombia. After being seized by the CIA and taken to Guantanamo, he is eventually handed over to the Cubans to answer to them for all his actions.

Domingo Chavez

Staff Sergeant Domingo Chavez is one of the last Hispanic NCOs to be recruited for operation SHOWBOAT. He is fit and highly trained in the field operations of Light Infantry. He becomes extremely efficient and professional in his craft and readily accepts the invitation to answer his country's needs.

Chavez began life as a gang member in the Barrios of Los Angeles. When a close personal friend was killed in a senseless drive-by shooting, he joins the army despite his near illiteracy. His first active duty is in Korea where he learns the value of discipline and how following it saves one's life.

With the encouragement of his officer and sergeant, Domingo Chavez, largely by his own efforts studies and passes the equivalent of a high school proficiency test. This personal triumph in his eyes, is a result of his army career, and Chavez feels that he is eternally in debt to the army.



Being of small stature, only five foot eight inches tall, Chavez cultivates physical strength and, above all, loves running. When he is posted to the 3rd Battalion, Light Infantry Division, he sharpens his field skills and becomes an expert in night operations, specializing in the stealth and intelligence gathering which go with the ultimate work of killing the enemy. Always the foremost in field operations and exercises, he comes to the attention of Dan Clark who is overseeing the training of the recruits for SHOWBOAT.

During the course of operation SHOWBOAT, the reader follows the experiences of Dingo Chavez and his fellow soldiers. He rapidly progresses from being an untried soldier to a seasoned warrior who takes pride in, who even exults in, the task of killing. As always it is the night vision goggles and the silenced firearms, which give him and his fellow soldiers, the advantage over their numerically superior enemy and lead to their invocation of their motto "Ninja! We own the night!"

At the conclusion of SHOWBOAT, a hardened veteran of close fighting emerges from the jungle leading his men, to be met by Dan Clark. Just as others had recognized special abilities in him years before, Clark recognizes the same unique abilities in Dingo Chavez and starts the process of recruiting him into the agency.

Dan Clark

Dan Clark reports to Bob Ritter and is usually found at the "Farm," the CIA training facility near Yorktown. His wife Sandy and his two daughters Maggie and Patricia aged seventeen and fourteen have a vague idea what their father does for a living, but he is a devoted father to them.

Clark is an ex Navy SEAL and spent nineteen months in South East Asia. He left the service and went into the demolition side of commercial diving, but his wife got killed in a car accident in Mississippi. Then his new girl friend was kidnapped and murdered by a local drug gang, so he began to wage his own personal campaign against "druggies" but when the police closed in, Greer recruits him. The CIA arranges for a change in identity and he now works for the CIA.

Ritter judges Clark a very capable field officer.

Carlos Larson

Carlos Larson is a covert CIA agent in Bogotá. Of mixed Danish and Venezuelan blood, he runs a flying school, which is much in demand from Cartel pilots whom he trains. Trusted by the Cartel, he is careful to avoid becoming embroiled in their operations.

Larson becomes Clark's right hand man in Colombia and frequently flies or drives Clark about the country near Medellin and Bogota.



Emil Jacobs

Emil Jacobs is the Director of the FBI and is known to his staff as "Emil." He has come to the FBI after a distinguished career as a United States Attorney in Chicago. Jacobs is that rare person, a Jew, in the predominantly Irish-Catholic FBI agency. His mission in life is to protect the weak from criminals. It stems from memories of what his father suffered during Prohibition.

When the ground troops in operation SHOWBOAT are due to be inserted in the jungle, Jacobs is scheduled to fly secretly to Colombia to meet the Attorney general of Colombia. Emil Jacobs, at a meeting with the President in the Oval Office, in the presence of the senior CIA officials running the covert operations, advises the President to cancel the covert operations in favor of more conventional and above board operations. His personal secretary is Moira Wolfe.

Bill Shaw

Executive Assistant Director Investigations at the FBI, Bill Shaw is one of the Bureau's leading intellectuals and has made his reputation tracking down domestic terrorists. In doing so he has rebuilt the FBI's intelligence gathering capabilities and, in a calm dispassionate way is an advocate of the death penalty. He becomes the de facto senior executive in the FBI after Director Jacobs is assassinated.

Dan Murray

Daniel E. Murray is the newly promoted Deputy Assistant Director at the FBI. He is in charge of the murders on the Yacht and reports to Bill Shaw. His education was at Boston College and he can still recite passages in Latin; he is of Irish-Catholic descent. He personally deals with the security leak from Moira Wolfe and ensures there is closure for her when he arranges for her to see the "repatriation" of Cortez.

Vice Admiral Cutter

Vice Admiral Cutter holds the position of National Security Advisor to the President. He is a patrician in looks and demeanor and descends from a long line of New England families. Though Cutter has had commands at sea on a destroyer and then a cruiser, he has spent more than half his career at the Pentagon. His office walls are covered with signed photographs and plaques from his various commands. Cutter is the chief interface with the President on the matter of the covert operations. He is outmaneuvered by his subordinate, Ritter, who gets him to sign a personal memorandum stating that Ritter is authorized by the President to carry out the covert operations, when this is, in fact, not true. Cutter is, therefore, the person who will be held responsible for anything that goes wrong. When the President gets cold feet, after the smart bomb on the Unitveros home also kills children and members of the family,



Cutter assures the President that he will shut down all the operations. The President deliberately distances himself from what Cutter is doing and for the record states that no one is to be killed. This, of course, is completely unrealistic.

Cutter's meeting with Cortez is viewed as betrayal by the CIA/FBI surveillance team, but in fact he openly acknowledges it to Ritter at their next meeting. It is his assumption of the responsibility for shutting down the operations to avoid a political scandal for the White House that proves his undoing. His callous betrayal of the ground troops to Cortez is his main transgression. An alternative plan to assassinate Cortez never crosses his mind, though Dan Clark would certainly have thought of it.

After a single confrontation with Dan Clark and his videotapes and photograph, he meekly goes off to commit suicide "For the Good of the Service." The complete reversal of a lifetime's duplicity and ambition seems a little strange. Surely there should have been some attempt to extricate himself from his betrayal. After all it was his responsibility to insulate the President from the results of his aim to derive political capital from the interdiction against the drug Cartel.

The President

The President, facing the fact that one of his electoral promises was to do something about the drug trade and here, in another election year, has nothing to show, issues a Presidential Finding that drug smuggling operations are a clear and present danger to US National Security. In doing so, he has the right to authorize judicious use of military force in accordance with established operational guidelines to protect US citizens. Both the President and the opposition in Congress have motivations to keep the operations as secret as possible, and Cutter has arranged for only an extremely limited group of people to be in the know.

When the Director of the FBI is killed by the Cartel in Bogota, the President reacts in an emotional way as Ernesto Escobedo does after the Cartel's assets are seized on the international scene. His deliberate invocation of Presidential Findings, for what is essentially political aims, and his deliberate distancing himself from the messy results of the actions he has authorized, make him appear to be a typical politician rather than a national leader. At the end of the story he loses the election to his political opponent.

Admiral Greer

Admiral Greer is the current Director of Intelligence for the CIA. It was he who brought Jack Ryan into the agency and he was also responsible for the recruitment of Dan Clark. Immensely popular in the agency, it is not only Jack Ryan who finds a surrogate father figure in him. Unfortunately he is hospitalized in Bethesda Hospital with pancreatic cancer. It is Admiral Greer who admonishes the man who is replacing him to be aware of all his responsibilities and his duty to inform Congress.



When he does succumb to cancer, it is significant that he has no personal friends at his bedside. He had been estranged from his wife because of the death of his only son in the marines in Vietnam. At his funeral, Jack Ryan is missing because he is off on his rescue mission and he is buried, according to his wishes, alongside his only son with only a very few close friends as witnesses. The implied tragedy of his personal life leads the reader to suppose the agency became his surrogate family and led to the universal respect and affection he engendered in his staff.

Bob Ritter

Bob Ritter is the Deputy Director of Operations at the CIA. He is the main contact with Admiral Cutter, on the covert operations and is the main organizing force behind the operational details. He has been advocating a "real" field operation for the CIA for years but is dismayed when his suggestion is made a reality by Admiral Cutter, the National Security Advisor. He dislikes Cutter intensely and believes Cutter lacks the experience and credentials to supervise a real field operation. Ritter believes Cutter is mesmerized by the glamor of field operations, without knowing much about the harsh realities involved. Nevertheless, it is Ritter himself who, finally, gives in to Cutter and provides him the means to turn over the fate of the ground troops to Cortez. His lack of courage and personal integrity is in sharp contrast with that displayed by Jack Ryan.

Judge Moore

Judge Moore is the Director of the CIA. He has acquiesced to the initiation of the covert operations against the Colombian Drug cartel. His intention to legalize these operations is to invoke SAHO, the special and hazardous operations codicil, whereby select members of the Congressional Oversight Committee will be made aware of the details. He suppresses his own personal reservations about the justification for these operations and tries to keep the newly appointed Director of Intelligence, Jack Ryan, out of the loop involving them. He and Bob Ritter, the Deputy Director of Operations, maintain the lie about the covert operations until, Jack Ryan, forces their hands.

Red Wegener

At the beginning of the story Captain Red Wegener is faced with the problem of extricating his new command, the Coast Guard cutter, Panache, from a nearly dysfunctional ship yard, and finishing off its commissioning.

He is the oldest lieutenant commander in the Coast Guard but is known throughout the service as the King of Search-and-Rescue missions. He joined the Coast Guard with a strong desire to get away from the wheat farms of Kansas. His reputation for courageous and daring rescues was made on the rugged Northern California coast and culminated in an epic, six hour battle with the elements when he rescued a disabled deep sea fishing boat from being driven on to a lee shore near the infamous bar at the mouth of the Columbia river.



The Panache under the command of Captain Wegener is based in Mobile Alabama and intercepts the yacht whose owner and family have been brutally murdered by pirates.

Later on, the Panache, holds a position in the eye of hurricane Adele, in order to provide a landing space on its helipad for the crippled Pave-Low helicopter coming out of Colombia with the remnants of the ground forces.

Paul Johns

Colonel Paul Jones, or "PJ" as he is known to all and sundry, is in charge of six Pave Low III helicopters at the 1st Special Operations Wing at Hurlburt Field, Eglin Air Force Base in Florida. He is a highly experienced rescue specialist with a long track record of service in the Vietnam theater and has been awarded the Medal of Honor. He is recruited for a special mission involving supporting covert forces on the ground in Colombia from a base in Panama.

Ernesto Escobedo

Ernesto Escobedo is the acknowledged leader among the Cartel chieftains. He is forty and has a great amount of energy and confidence. He has uncountable wealth, a beautiful wife, and two fine sons. He is also brutal and ruthless in arranging the savage executions of his enemies, often forcing the victim to watch his wife and children to be raped and murdered before he suffers the same fate. His personal involvement in these acts, instead of leaving it to underlings, has earned him fear and respect among the drug Cartel.

Despite his enormous wealth and power among his own group, Escobedo yearns for the respect and prestige the original wealthy robber barons in early America enjoyed. He does not see any difference between his activities and those of the great railway pioneers and capitalists in the first part of the twentieth century in America.

Moira Wolfe

Moira Wolfe is the executive secretary to the Director of the FBI. She is a widow, having lost her husband, Rich, to a brain aneurysm a few years before. Now, with almost grown-up kids, she chances to meet a South American businessman who says his name is Juan Diaz. The ensuing romantic love affair re-awakens her feelings of sensuality and her children and colleagues all notice and approve of her new radiance. Unfortunately, her lover is Felix Cortez, who uses Moira to find out about the secret visit, to Bogota, of the FBI Director. When she is told that it was her phone call to Venezuela that led to the breach in security, she attempts suicide. Later, exonerated of any direct guilt, she is taken to Guantanamo to witness the "repatriation" to his former employers of Felix Cortez.



Senator Fowler

Senator Bob Fowler is the Governor of Ohio and the leading opponent to the President in the forthcoming elections. He has an unsatisfactory confrontation with Jack Ryan, who is unable to persuade him to give up his "holier than thou" attitude on covert operations. After a lackluster political campaign, he defeats the incumbent by a close margin.

Jeff Winters

"Bronco" Winters is the young, black fighter jockey who flies the F-15C fighter, which carries out the interceptions of the drug-carrying aircraft flying towards the US. Twenty-seven years old, newly promoted to the rank of Captain, he is a brilliant jet fighter pilot. His mother was killed by "druggies" in New York, which gives him special incentive for his clandestine mission. He also has the ambition to be an ace, which would result from five "kills."

Mark Bright

Mark Bright is the Supervisory Special Agent (FBI) in Mobile, Alabama. He is a member of the team who discovers the hidden computer disks, which contain the details of the drug Cartel's money laundering operations, at the home of the murdered owner of the yacht Empire Builder. He also takes part, with Dan Murray, in the investigation of the mock court martial and hanging on board the Panache. Later in the story he is recruited by Dan Murray to follow Admiral Cutter to his meeting with Cortez in Panama.



Objects/Places

US Government Offices

Government offices are the Oval Office in the White House, the Presidential retreat at Camp David, and the CIA headquarters at Langley.

US Military Units

Specific military units are the 1st Special Operations Wing, Eglin AFB, the Navy SEALs and the Infantry Division (Light) 'LIDS', 17th Infantry Light, Fort Ord, California.

US Government Agencies

US Government agencies that play important parts in the story are, the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), the National Security Agency (NSA), the United States Coast Guard Service (USCG), and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA).

Bogota

Bogota is the capital of Colombia.

Medellin

Medellin is the city in Colombia which is the main base for the drug Cartel in Colombia.

Riseralda Province

Riseralda Province is the area on Colombia's Pacific Coast in whose valleys the Cartel has established mobile drug processing sites

Anserma

Anserma is the village in Colombia where Cortez controls his ground forces and from where he is seized by Clark and the evacuating SHOWBOAT troops.



Mobile

Mobile, Alabama, is the base for USCGC Panache and residence of the owner of the Yacht Empire Builder. It is also the city where the convicted "pirates" are jailed and where a local policeman and his wife are gunned down by "druggies."

Colorado Rockies

These mountains, within sight of the Moffat Tunnel, is location of a secret, high-altitude training camp.

Ordinance and Weapons

Specific weapons and ordinance items are: the Ground Laser Designator device used to guide a smart bomb to its target (GLD); Smart Bombs GBU-15, a laser-guided bomb; Night vision goggles, used by both ground troops and pilots; MP-5, machine gun with silencer used by the in-country ground forces; the SAW, Section Automatic Weapon, a light, silenced machine gun; Ak-47 automatic rifle used throughout the world and by the Cartel ground forces; The Minigun on the Pave Low helicopter, which is a scaled down version of the Vulcan 20 mm cannon comprising six, 30-caliber barrels, delivering 66 or 100 rounds per second.

Military Bases

US Military and Air Force bases are; Andrews Air Force Base; Hunter-Liggett, part of Fort Ord Complex, California and training ground for 17th Light Infantry Division; Hurlburt Field, Eglin AFB, Florida, home of the Pave-Low helicopter base; Howard AFB, Panama, used for support of the ground operations in Colombia and Guantanamo, Cuba.

Military Aircraft

US Military Aircraft are; the F-15C and F-15E, different versions of Strike-Eagle Fighters "The Eagle"; the F-14 Tomcat interceptor; the A-6E Intruder medium attack bomber based on Aircraft Carriers; the giant Pave-Low Helicopter MH-53J built by Sikorsky; the Lockheed Hercules MC-130E support and refueling tanker aircraft (the Herky Bird); the EWACS Airborne Radar aircraft; the VC-20A executive jet used by US Government officials

Ships

US Coast Guard Cutter (USCGC) Panache



US Aircraft Carrier USN Ranger and its battle group of approximately 30 ships.

The Empire Builder: a sixty-foot luxury yacht attacked by pirates in the Mexico Gulf.

Code Words and Call Signs

Critical code words and call signs used in the story are;

SHOWBOAT, CAPER, EAGLE EYE, ODYSSEY TARPON, RECIPROCAL, KNIFE, VARIABLE, WRANGLER, CAESAR, SNAKE.

Adele

Adele is the name of the first Atlantic Hurricane of the season.

Mons

Mons, a town in Belgium at which there is a NATO conference which Jack Ryan attends.

Social Sensitivity

Clear and Present Danger focuses on the terrible problems created by the transportation and sale of illegal drugs to the United States. Although there are frequent references to the evils done to America's citizens by drugs — its young people in particular — the novel focuses primarily on the evils of rape, murder, torture, and theft committed by leaders of the Colombian drug cartel and their followers. Of Clancy's novels to date, Clear and Present Danger presents the most immediate portrait of cruelty and murder. Even Red Storm Rising's (1986) awful slaughter of thousands of soldiers and civilians has a detached air about it, with the killings seemingly abstract and remote. But Clear and Present Danger has several scenes of outright horror, and its detailed references to rape, torture, and murder vivify the vile natures of the drug smugglers. This is a tough look at the harsh world of illegal drug trafficking.



Techniques

Like *The Hunt for Red October* (1984), and Clancy's other novels, *Clear and Present Danger* is episodic; the attack against the drug cartel serves to focus the actions of the many characters. This focus helps keep events in perspective; everything a character does is measured against its effectiveness in hurting or aiding the cartel. Bashing drug smugglers is likely to appeal to many readers, but Clancy avoids pandering to those who expect the complete destruction of vile villains. Instead, the novel explores the moral ambiguities and confusions of the situation.

Cutter seems right at the novel's start when he insists that the drug cartel needs to be hit hard by America's might. The reader finds himself whole-heartedly agreeing, but as the plot progresses the reader becomes mired in the consequences of Cutter's statement. At first, the attacks on drug manufacturing facilities are all excitement, with evil men being killed, but then the bodies of unarmed villagers are found among the dead, poor peasants who are only trying to feed their families by doing menial tasks for the cartel. These deaths bother the American soldiers, who see the villagers as victims of their poverty. In the same way, other situations are set up as ideal or desirable and then revealed as ambiguous in their consequences.

Many American troops perish as the conflict intensifies in the Colombian jungles. The leader of a combat team, Captain Ramirez, is courageous, honest, thoughtful, and caring. But being caring gets him killed. Good people die in war, but bad people sometimes survive.

Clancy again dips into his bag of technological wonders to describe all of the paraphernalia, weaponry, and tactics of the infantry combat team.

There are laser guided smart bombs, night-vision goggles, and helicopter gunships. More down-to-earth, perhaps, than SDI or nuclear submarines, the details nonetheless provide an interesting look at the technology of modern warfare.



Themes

Threats to National Security

The title of the book, "Clear and present Danger" invokes the concept of threats to the security of the United States. This condition allows the President to order judicious use of military force to protect the safety of the citizens of the United States. The definition of what exactly is a threat to national security is the main underlying theme of the book. Through the point of view of the different characters, various opinions are expressed, and it is only at the ending climax that the reader is acquainted with the correct and legal position of the President and his advisors, and the oversight of the US Congress is obtained. The checks and balances of the United States Constitution allow the chief executive leeway to meet immediate threats, but the authority of Congress is always required for acts of war and armed conflict.

The underlying fallacy, that the Colombian drug trade is a threat to national security, is only gradually exposed during the story. The political environment of a presidential election year and the failure of the administration to produce tangible results in dealing with the Colombian drug trade lead to the mounting of a covert in-country surveillance operation. This is barely legal, though if the permission of the Attorney General of Colombia had been obtained, it would have remained within the sphere of approval of Congressional Oversight. The escalation of this operation to the destruction of the Cartel's processing plants is when the line of legality is crossed.

As Cortez points out in his meeting with Admiral Cutter, the drug trade will never be completely ended until either the American Government legalizes the drugs and/or American drug users cease demanding the substance and abusing it. That drug abuse is possibly a very real threat to American security is not in doubt, as would the uncontrolled spread of any other nationwide "disease." The solution is to reduce or eliminate demand, rather than engage in covert acts of war.

The reference to Cortez's actions with the Machateros in Puerto Rico and their attempt to overthrow the government there and replace it with a Communist-type regime is an example of a real danger to National Security, which would warrant covert operations.

During the unfolding of this story, the reader is left to form his or her own opinion as to the legality of the actions of the President, though there are many hints in the opinions of some of the participants as to whether "this is all to do with it being an election year." However, there is a clear indication in the opening Prologue with the reference to the foresight of the founding fathers in anticipating the enemies of the nation that there is, in the Oval office, an enemy of the State. Whether this enemy is embodied in National Security Advisor, Admiral Cutter or in the President himself is not specified. At any rate the reader is warned that "the enemy is within!" and must form his or her own opinion.



Justice

There has always been a distinction between legal justice and the emotional satisfaction from direct and immediate punishment for crimes. The 18th century code of maritime regulations, *Rocks and Shoals*, allowed for the captain of a Coast Guard vessel to summarily court martial and execute pirates on the high seas. These regulations have now been replaced by the Uniform Code of Military Justice, but the reaction of the Captain of the USCGC *Panache* to invoke the older, more direct form of justice, is all too easily accepted, given the brutality of the murders on board the *Empire Builder*. The fact that the "execution" was a sham does not exonerate the crew for breaking the current law, and the unfortunate result is that the murderers are quite likely to plea bargain a reprieve from the death sentence.

The discussion between the different lawyers and law enforcement officers as to whether to allow the Coast Guard crew to be sacrificed on the altar of legality in an attempt to invoke the death penalty for the murderers is a compendium of the details of legal niceties compared to the emotional satisfaction of exemplary justice. Now, in contrast to the ethical dilemmas of the lawyers, the Mobile police, enraged by the assassination of one their own officers and his wife, who is caught in the hail of bullets, step in with their own version of summary justice. The stabbing death of the two murderers in the Mobile jail is carried out by two convicted murderers. The implication is that the jailhouse murders are justified because the victims are "druggies" and the executioners are men who murdered other "druggies."

The disposition of the prisoner Escobedo in the final exit by the ground forces from Colombia is another example of the curtailment of legal ethics in favor of more direct justice. Jack Ryan prevents Dan Clark from giving Escobedo a "flying lesson" from the tail of the *Pave-Low* helicopter. In response Clark takes Escobedo back to Medellin and delivers him to the waiting Cartel members, who are now convinced he is a traitor. The reader can only imagine that Escobedo might actually have preferred to be tossed out of the helicopter rather than the fate which awaits him at the hands of his own colleagues. Recalling Escobedo's philosophy of brutal example in meting out punishments to his own enemies one might conclude that legal ethics and poetic justice have both been equally served.

Technology

As with other books by the same author, this one is rich in the details of technology. It starts with an intricate account of the various precautions taken to safeguard the personal security of the President as he conducts a meeting in the Oval office. It goes on to expound at length on the details of each element in the story. Thus the reader is treated to technical insights about close contact jungle fighting to the overall principles of satellite launches from Cape Canaveral. Many of these mini treatises are a necessary adjunct to understanding the story. Thus it really does help the reader to know the major elements of flying and operating the giant *Pave-Low* helicopter. The exposition of the



characteristics of the helicopter's miniguns is necessary to following Jack Ryan's experiences when he gets to use one. Likewise, the controls and configuration of the Pave-Lo's two turbines is essential to the elements of understanding the tension and danger as the whole ground force is flown out of a "hot extraction" site.

Having said that, there is a noteworthy tendency for the main characters in the story to take urgent flights aboard military jets to get to various locations in the story. The reader might be suspicious of an element of self-indulgence on the part of the author, and also of the reader, as they vicariously experience the thrill of flying in the world's fastest jet fighters.

Finally, as an adjunct to the exposition of technology, the reader is bombarded with a plethora of acronyms. In technical, scientific papers the explanation of an acronym is given when it is first used. Not so in this book. The meaning of GLD, in connection with smart bomb delivery is only given after more than one description of the actions of Clark and Larson at the Unitveros house. Again the meaning of B/N (bombardier/navigator) is only revealed after this has been used several times, and the meaning of DLG in Cortez's previous employment in Cuban Intelligence is never illuminated.

Even so, many readers must find this aspect of the writing as very attractive and it is fairly easy to skip over those passages which are not of personal interest.

Significant Topics

Clear and Present Danger takes as a premise that there are people in the world who are utterly evil. Ernesto Escobedo is one such character. He considers himself to be a man of honor, but his sense of honor is twisted. He gives a follower the "honor" of executing a traitor to the drug cartel because he feels he owes the man a favor. The execution involves the rape of the traitor's wife and daughter before his eyes; then the family members are murdered one at a time, the traitor last.

Escobedo remembers with satisfaction when he did the same thing in his youth; rape and torture are to him honorable ways to assert dominance over one's enemies. This is sickening, but Escobedo's rationalizations are frighteningly plausible.

Betrayal is another significant theme in Clear and Present Danger. Much of the novel's suspense hinges on the fact that any mistake can bring on immediate retribution; so schemers are constantly in danger. Escobedo schemes to become a political leader. His aide Felix Cortez schemes to kill Escobedo and the other leaders of the drug cartel and take control of the drug operation to undermine the United States with a flood of drugs.

There are schemers on the other side of the conflict, as well. The nastiest of these is Vice Admiral James Cutter, who urges the president to launch a secret war against the Colombian drug cartel. But soon after the clandestine American force begins to operate in Colombia, Cutter finds himself trapped between his responsibilities for deaths caused by the war and his desire to have an unblemished record. To escape his dilemma, he



conspires with Cortez to abandon the American soldiers, who have been "inserted" into Colombia.

Even the well-intentioned scheme of the Coast Guard crew at the novel's beginning results in deaths. The schemes and counterschemes pull people deeper into confusion.

The title *Clear and Present Danger* suggests another of the novel's themes: that of the limitations of presidential power. "It is determined that drugsmuggling operations are a clear and present danger to U.S. national security. The president authorizes the judicious use of military force in accord with established operational guidelines to protect our citizens," declares a key document in the novel.

In an emotional moment, the president has publicly promised to strike back at the drug smugglers, and he feels political pressure to live up to his word. When Cutter suggests that there is a "clean" way to hurt the drug cartel, the president yields to a suggestion to authorize the use of military force.

But the president requires "deniability" — meaning that he does not want to know any details so that if something goes wrong he can disavow the operation. The CIA is expected to run the operation in spite of their objections.

When the president discovers that innocent people are killed in the bombing of a cartel meeting, he is horrified and orders Cutter to end the operation.

The novel seems to suggest that if a president feels strongly enough about an issue to authorize the use of military force, then he should also be willing to take responsibility for the outcomes. Requiring "deniability" is little more than admitting cowardice.

This belies some critics' contention that Clancy is a simple-minded cold warrior who favors the indiscriminate use of military power and technology.

He shows that the application of America's military force — particularly, clandestine force — is accompanied by a multitude of complications.

Style

Point of View

The format of the book comprises a series of scenes, all approximately contemporaneous in time, and all in different settings with different characters. This leads to frequent changes in the point of view, as the action or narrative cuts from scene to scene. The point of view is generally that of the third person attached for each character. Emotions and opinions are usually expressed through dialog with other characters. Occasionally there is an exposition of the thoughts of a specific character, usually in connection with an explanation or justification for an opinion or action. A prime example would be the interchanges between Felix Cortez and Ernesto Escobedo.

Characters entering the narrative for the first time are often accompanied by thumbnail sketches of their personal history. These thumbnail sketches are in the third person omniscient point of view.

The main use of the omniscient third person point of view, however, is in the frequent and lengthy expositions of the technical details of the different military weapons systems, aircraft, aircraft operations and, above all, in the accounts of close combat jungle field craft.

The different scenes are centered on individual characters rather than specific places and the characters change locations frequently. Despite this the reader is able to follow the unfolding story without difficulty as the narrative slips effortlessly between the many and varied points of view.

Setting

The setting for the story follows the deployment of the ground troops for the covert actions, through training and then action in the Colombian jungle. The main setting for much of the action is the Colombian jungle.

The associated actions to support the covert action in the field leads to scenes from the Oval Office in the White House, army bases in Florida, Panama and on board a Coast Guard Cutter. The richness of the details of each locale is part of the attraction of the book. For example the opening scene with the description of the physical security of the Oval office has an authentic air about it but does little to augment the discussion between the President and his advisors, which is, of course, the main ingredient of the section.

An important aspect of the book is the frequent flights by characters, either in the Pave-Lo helicopter or in jet fighters. All these aircraft are routinely refueled in flight and so an important setting is often the in-flight scenario in various geographic locations.



A contrast is the setting on board the Coast Guard Cutter Panache. This setting occurs at the beginning of the book and then in the climactic landing of the Pave-Low in the eye of a hurricane. The versatility of the author in the authentic portrayal of these vastly different scenarios is part of the attraction of the book.

Language and Meaning

Consistent with the accurate portrayal of the technology, settings, and action of the story, the language of the characters is equally true to character. Thus the vocabulary of the combat soldiers in the Colombian jungle, and the dialogs of the different elements of the law enforcement agents is given with the realism required and is replete with expletives, profanities, and acronyms. The use of expletives, however, is fairly restrained and is consistent with a realistic portrayal of the situations.

In the passages of exposition about the technological aspects of the various weapon systems, aircraft and boats, the tone is that of direct instruction. Occasionally, there are metaphors and similes used, but the instructional tone is sufficient to present the details in a factual manner. Thus the description of the awesome fire power of the Pave-Low's miniguns calls for dramatic similes when they are used in the evacuation under fire and in the attack on Cortez's headquarters, but the reader has previously been informed that the cannons can deliver 60 to 100 rounds a second.

There are few poetic or visual descriptions of the various scenes. The high altitude camp in the Colorado Rockies is described from the point of view of a soldier carrying a fifty-pound pack. There is only one single reference to sunsets at sea on board the Panache.

In general the language of the characters and the dialogs is spare and utilitarian. The liberal use of acronyms occasionally leads to confusion on the part of the reader, but it is in keeping with the military nature of the story.

Structure

The book comprises thirty named chapters and a Prologue. A common feature throughout the book is the fact that each chapter contains multiple scenes, which occur in the same time frame. From chapter to chapter, the scenes are linked to those in the previous and subsequent chapters. This style of time division multiplexing is consistently used throughout the book. The technique is also used in the Prologue, though now the scenes are in the nature of flash forwarding and the contemporaneity of the time scale is discarded.

The technique of narration is very much in the nature of cinematic film. Often a scene will open with dialogue between the main characters without any exposition as to the location and background to the action. The reader is expected to retain familiarity with the background and the characters from previous scenes. This fact, and the heavy use of sometimes-unexplained acronyms imply that the reader will be "skipping" through



some of the passages. The use of capitalized code words for most of the major operations and for elements in the communication chain does help enormously in providing the reader with an aid to navigation through the different settings.

The penchant for the author to vary the designation of a person, or a piece of equipment, may be a way to avoid monotony in the text but, for example, referring to the giant helicopter, which is a key element in the story as "the Pave-Low," "the MH-53J," the "Sikorsky" and "PJ's chopper" all within one scene leads to confusion on the part of the already-challenged reader.

However, the time multiplexed technique, in general works well, and the frequent cuts from one scene to another does heighten the drama of the story and maintains a fast-moving pace.



Quotes

"'I promised the American people that we'd do something about this problem.' The President observed crossly. 'And we haven't accomplished shit.'" Prologue: Situation, p 4.

"'Jesus,' Wegener breathed. That had to be it, didn't it? They made him watch, and then they killed them all....carved up the bodies and tossed them over the side. 'Bastards.'" Chapter 1. The King of SAR, p 32.

"It's a special job. It might be a little dangerous, but probably not. We're not sure yet. It'll last a couple of months at most. At the end you make E-7 and have your choice of assignments." Chapter 2. Creatures of the Night, p 41.

"'Very well. The court having voted, two-thirds of the members concurring, finds the defendant guilty, and sentences him to death by hanging. Sentence to be carried out within the hour. May God have mercy on your soul. Court is adjourned.'" Chapter 3. The Panache Procedure, pp 57, 58.

"'Look, Admiral, I've told you about that. If you want some magical solution to give to the President, we don't have it. What we can do is sting them some. The results will look pretty good in the papers, and, hell, maybe we'll end up saving a life or two. Personally I think it's worth doing even if we don't get much of a return.'" Chapter 7. Knowns and Unknowns, p 115.

"' If you permit it, I wish to know about you, Moira. I come to Washington frequently, and I wish . . . I am tired of the loneliness. I am tired of . . . I wish to know you,' he said with conviction. Then, tentatively, haltingly, hopeful but afraid, 'If you permit it.'" Chapter 7. Knowns and Unknowns, p 125.

"'Come left to three-four-seven. I will be following you in. You got some big league explaining to do Carib. You picked a bad place to be flying without lights. I hope you got a good story, 'cause the colonel is not pleased with you. Bring that fat-assed bird left—now!'" Chapter 9. Meeting, Engagement, p 170.

"The American police are hamstrung because their political leadership does not allow them to act as they wish to act—and as they could act, in a moment, if those restrictions were ever eased. The American FBI — the federales—have resources beyond your comprehension. I know, they hunted me in Puerto Rico and came within a hair of capturing me along with Ojeda—and I am a trained intelligence officer." Chapter 11. In-Country, p 204.

"'Sigint Report
Intercept 345 Init 2349Z Frq 836.970 MHZ
Init: Subject Bravo
Recip: Subject Echo



B: WE'VE LOST ANOTHER DELIVERY. [AGITATION]

E: WHAT HAPPENED?

B: THE CURSED THING DIDN'T APPEAR. WHAT DO YOU THINK? [AGITATION].

E: THEY'RE DOING SOMETHING DIFFERENT. I TOLD YOU THAT. WE'RE TRYING TO FIND OUT WHAT IT IS." Chapter 13. The Bloody Weekend, p 260.

"Roger, copy, we are go-mission. We are ten minutes out. Start the music." Chapter 18. Force Majeure, p 389.

"And we caught hell for it every time! Nobody cares why we did it; all they care about is that we killed the wrong people. Christ, Jim, that was a kid! What are we going to say? Oh that's too bad, but he was in the wrong place?" Chapter 19. Fallout, p 407

"Knife this is VARIABLE, we read you loud and clear. Over"

'Knife reports armed men entering the woods five miles east-southeast our position. Estimate reinforced platoon in strength, and heading our way.'" Chapter 22. Disclosures, p 481.

"What we can do is shut this operation down, and do it at once. And keep a nice tight lid on it forever. This one never happened. I didn't bargain for any of this, not for the civilian casualties, and sure as hell not for losing nine of our own people. Damn it, Admiral, you told me those kids were so good — " Chapter 24. Ground Rules, p 537.

"It will never be stopped. So long as your citizens wish to destroy their brains, someone will make this possible. The question, then, is how do we make this process more orderly." Chapter 25. The ODYSSEY FILE, p 559.

"And what if he blows it? It is not worth the risk. Call off your dog. That, too, is an order. Now give me that information - and shred your files." Chapter 26. Instruments of State, p 567.

"Why should I trust you? Somebody cut us off, man. Somebody decided to leave us here." Chapter 28. Accounting, p 630.

"CLAW this is LITTLE EYES. We have a possible firefight underway below FEATURE LZ." Chapter 29. Fill Ups, p 649.

"Fine. You can testify to that someday. Its only a hundred miles off the coast, and if it doesn't work, we'll use the winds to slingshot us around. CLAW, I need a position check on Alternate One." Chapter 29. Fill Ups, p 661

"Panache, this is CAESAR, where the hell are you?" Chapter 29. Fill Ups, p 669.

"Yes, you do, Mr. President,' Ryan said quietly. 'You authorized it. It is my duty under the law to report on these matters to Congress. Before I do so, I felt it necessary to

notify you. I asked the two congressmen here to witness my doing so.'" Chapter 30. The Good of the Service, p 682.

Adaptations

Paramount Pictures produced the motion picture version of *Clear and Present Danger* and released it in 1994.

Mace Neufeld, Robert Rehme, Ralph Singleton were the producers. It was directed by Phillip Noyce. The screen play was by Donald Stewart, Steven Zallian, and John Milius. It won Academy Awards for Best Sound Effects and Best Sound. Harrison Ford, who had signed on to star as Jack Ryan in five motion pictures, appears for the second time as Ryan. As in *Patriot Games*, he delivers a fine performance as the scholarly man of action.

Readers of the novel are likely to be jarred by the many liberties taken with the story, especially the changes in the characters. Robert Ritter (played by Henry Czerny) is completely changed, becoming a vicious villain, and the president (played by Donald Moffat) is radically changed in personality from the upright if somewhat dim figure of the novel. Some of the basics of the novel remain, most notably the drug cartel. In general, reviewers liked the motion picture, and it is fairly successful as a thriller.

Key Questions

Clear and Present Danger is a frightening novel. Clancy's research is, as usual, impressive, and the accounts of grotesque evil ring true, making the novel not for the faint of heart. It is full of ideas and social issues and offers many opportunities for discussion.

The most obvious approach to the novel would be to focus on the issues of drug abuse. Drug users in the United States fill a rich drug industry run by some of the world's most despicable human beings. How responsible are we Americans for the problems generated by the drug trade? Do Americans care about what their drug suppliers do to people?

Another tack to take would be to focus on law enforcement. Are Clancy's portraits of law enforcement people accurate? Would members of the Coast Guard be as frustrated by the evils they face as they are portrayed in the novel? Would police officers resort to quasilegal methods to deal with drug cartel members as some seem to do in Clear and Present Danger?

The art of the novel also calls for attention. Note how Clancy defies expectations. One fantasy a person might entertain would be what would happen if America waged a real war against illicit drug manufacturers; Clear and Present Danger gives that fantasy form, and provides some wish fulfillment as bad guys are blown away, but ultimately the results are disastrous.

Clancy points out that there is no way to wage a clean war — noncombatants inevitably are hurt, and Americans might find that intolerable. Poor people, just trying to hold their lives together from day-to-day are as likely to be hurt as are the despicable drug lords who employ them. What can the United States military realistically do?

What actions can the president take beyond what he already has done?

1. Clancy turns a cold gaze on the drug trade and strips it of romance. It is mean, cruel, and vicious. Its victims are tormented in vile, hideous ways.

How does someone prove to a drug lord that he has not betrayed the drug cartel: By maintaining his innocence while being tortured to death. His or her death proves innocence. Are Americans aware of the nature of the drug trade? Are they sheltered from its worst implications? How does Clancy address those questions in Clear and Present Danger?

2. How realistic are the major events of the novel? Would the drug cartel actually assassinate high-ranking American officials? Has it actually done so? Could America drop a bomb right into a cartel conference?



3. Why doesn't the United States use its enormous power to stomp the life out of those who supply the illicit drug trade? Could we not use our military to sweep them away?

4. Clancy plainly wants his readers to consider the moral implications of the actions the United States could take against the drug cartel. What are his conclusions about the morality of the possible actions? Do you agree with them? Has he missed an important factor?

5. What do you think of the delusions of grandeur entertained by drug lords in the novel? Could they realistically hope to become dominant political figures? How would other countries react if a drug lord became a nation's president? Are these delusions psychologically plausible? Would a drug lord think in such terms?

6. Clancy follows this novel with *The Sum of All Fears*, another portrait of evil. A comparison of the two novels could be fruitful. It would reveal some of Clancy's artistry; note how chilly the evil in *The Sum of All Fears* is. Murdering even one's friends is accepted as a commonplace of everyday life by the novel's terrorists. Note how hot-blooded the evil in *Clear and Present Danger* is. People in the drug trade do great evil in order to show off to or show up rivals; they do it to keep followers in line; they do it because they believe it proves their machismo. Clancy creates two very different portraits of evil and makes each one convincing.

7. How well is the character Jack Ryan integrated into *Clear and Present Danger*? Is he the center of the action?

8. Does the novel offer any realistic solutions to the drug trade?

9. How well does Clancy cover the immense social dilemmas created by the American drug trade?

10. Does Clancy oversimplify any problems in the novel? Does he make any too complex?

11. How well does he explain the technology of the drug war? Are readers likely to have a better idea of what is happening after reading the novel?

Are they likely to have a better understanding of the difficulties America faces in combating the illegal drug trade?

12. With all the disgusting evils presented in *Clear and Present Danger*, how does it manage to be entertaining?

13. Is *Clear and Present Danger* ever preachy?

14. How do American politics shape reaction to the drug trade in the novel?



Topics for Discussion

The position of Admiral Cutter in being left holding the bag of responsibility for the covert operations is likened to being caught out in a game of musical chairs. His responsibility is to insulate the President from any blame, especially, as does happen, there are unintended consequences. But what of the position of the CIA and FBI directors? True, FBI Director Jacobs advises the president to drop the covert operations, but he then "washes his hands" of the affair, and Ritter, who basically designed the operations, outmaneuvers the Admiral into writing a personal note, which gives Ritter a legal alibi from responsibility. Compare the ethical behavior of the CIA and FBI directors with those of Jack Ryan and Dan Murray.

As Felix Cortez recalls with the fiasco of the covert Iran operations in the Carter presidency, reliance on single pieces of equipment, especially helicopters, is fraught with danger. In SHOWBOAT, a single giant helicopter is used to support the mission and, as Dan Clark finds out, there is only the single satellite communications link with the ground forces. Wouldn't it have been better to have several helicopters, maybe five, one for each squad and an alternate communications link? After all, NSA is monitoring the Cartel phone calls. Discuss possible flaws in the deployment of the covert operation SHOWBOAT.

Satellite surveillance is used successfully to pinpoint the drug processing sites and once the drug cartel secret airstrips have also been identified would it not have been possible to use airborne-early-warning radar surveillance aircraft (E-3A AWACS) to follow the drug courier aircraft until they land in the United States. It would then have been possible to capture the drug shipment and the stateside distributors? Discuss the operational necessity and the ethics for "splashing" drug courier aircraft.

When confronted with the realities of his actions, the President claims he did not bargain for the civilian deaths and for the loss of the American soldiers. But at Camp David, after the assassination of the FBI Director, the reader is left in no doubt that his motivation is simple revenge. Compare the President's reaction at Camp David with Ernesto Escobedo's reaction to the announcement of the seizure of the Cartel's international financial assets. Do not both reactions cause irreparable harm to the perpetrator?

With the implementation of TARPON, the President has the political ammunition to claim the results against the Cartel that he desired. If he had followed the advice of the FBI Director would he have not achieved his objectives and would not Emil Jacobs not have had to make his fateful trip to Bogota? Discuss the danger of "knee jerk" emotional reactions.

Compare the ethics and morality of the actions of the Captain of the Panache, the Mobile police, and the drug defense lawyer, Stuart, in the case of the "pirates." When, if ever, does society have the right to defend itself against wanton and brutal murder and



to bypass a distorted and imperfect legal system to impose direct sanctions on convicted killers? Discuss.

The in-country soldiers, become proficient in killing their enemies. What is the moral distinction between members of the SHOWBOAT teams and the Cartel guards at the processing sites? Is the killing of the unarmed peasant laborers and members of the drug Cartel leader's families justified? Are the US soldiers and CIA agents exonerated because they are simply carrying out orders? Discuss.

Was Admiral Cutter's suicide premature given that the President eventually does persuade the Oversight Congressmen to not make a major scandal out of the failed covert operations? What made him decide to take all the blame for the results of the covert actions when they were a partial success with TARPON and the initiation of internal feuds among the cartel? Could he have not have imputed some of the blame on the other players, such as Ritter and Judge Moore, who at least went along with the deception. Was it primarily his guilt over the betrayal of the US soldiers to Cortez's men, which led him to take the "honorable" way out? Discuss.

Literary Precedents

In the pattern of the cold war espionage novel, *Clear and Present Danger* has spies, soldiers, and political leaders all plotting against one another, yet it touches only briefly on the contest between East and West. Its focus is the conflict between Western democracies and international drug dealers. The drug dealers make formidable enemies; their immense wealth enables them to bribe people in high positions of public trust. Add to this the many legal limitations on a democratic government's ability to act against untried and unconvicted criminals, and *Clear and Present Danger* has all the complexity it needs for a gripping tale of espionage.

Related Titles

Some critics refer to the "Jack Ryan series" of novels because Jack Ryan is a continuing character in Clancy's books. It seems clear that Clancy likes the Ryan character, who is both a man of action and a man of quiet deliberation. In suspense, *Clear and Present Danger* may outdo its predecessors; the consequences for mistakes in the story are even more horrible than the physician-run Soviet torture chambers in *The Cardinal of the Kremlin* (1988). Enhancing the suspense in each novel is the knowledge that the underlying events are essentially true. People are raped, mutilated, and murdered by the drug cartel every day.



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