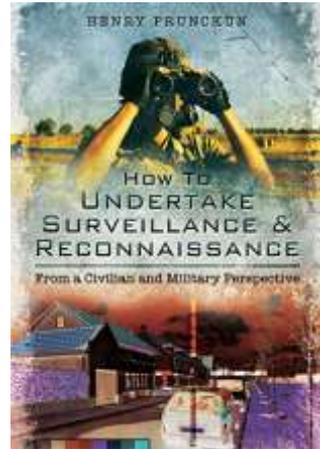


How to Undertake Surveillance and Reconnaissance: From a Civilian and Military Perspective

by Henry Prunckun
Pen & Sword Military, South Yorkshire, UK
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Reviewed by Dr Patrick F Walsh



Dr Prunckun is a seasoned intelligence studies scholar and former intelligence officer who has written on a range of related topics. In this recent release, he has presented students with an important primer on how to undertake surveillance and reconnaissance. Baring a few dated military field manuals on the topic, his current treatment covers this topic greater depth.

This interesting book comprises ten chapters that set-out what surveillance and reconnaissance are, and what there are not. It steps those readers who are new to the subject matter from beginning to end, and in the process showing how to put the theory of reconnaissance into practice, (particularly reconnaissance tradecraft). Moreover, it discusses how to counter the reconnaissance efforts of adversaries. This is an aspect of tradecraft I haven't seen in print before.

In defining reconnaissance, Prunckun rightly points out the crossover that exists between it and the broader interests of intelligence collection, but he argues that the focus of reconnaissance is firmly fixed on what might be seen as the tactical aspects of intelligence, leaving the operational and strategic aspects to those whose practice is intelligence. That is, Prunckun argues that reconnaissance is making observation that inform the action-in-chief. It can be part of the intelligence cycle, but it can be an independent activity.

Chapter three provides the reader with a clear articulation of what Prunckun terms the seven tenets of reconnaissance, which include, amongst other things: the aims of the recon mission; central coordination; communication; reliability; and deception (pp. 23–24). There is also a good survey of the various uses of reconnaissance (e.g. air, amphibious, armed, civil, and radar).

Many of the examples Prunckun presents in the book have a military application, though the author recognises the broader need for these skills by such occupations as private investigators, bodyguards, bailiffs, and security guards. Indeed, he makes this point clearly in the introduction, but I would add that his ‘how-to’ book is also relevant to, sadly, ordinary citizens who now have a need to gain greater situational awareness in places like subways, school campuses, and other public places due to the rise in home-grown terrorism, which is becoming a feature of modernity.

Chapter 5 (surveillance) shows the relationship between reconnaissance, surveillance and intelligence collection, though I would argue that the growing proactive application of intelligence collection post-9/11 (particularly covert searches) makes the relationship between these three activities more dynamic and overlapping than the author suggests.

Chapter 8 (counter-reconnaissance) holds has some timely lessons for our security and law enforcement services as they attempt to increase awareness of terrorist operational planning and counter-jihadist surveillance activities in a way that secures vulnerable sites yet reassures the public about their safety.

There is a final chapter on ethics that rounds-out the book by reminding the reader of the ethical dilemmas posed by surveillance, reconnaissance, and intelligence, which is always a complex issue. Prunckun stresses that there is no simplistic method to ameliorate ethical dilemmas because much depends on the methods of surveillance, the context in which they are used, and who is being targeted. Though, legislation and oversight can help manage such ethical issues to some extent.

In summary, this book provides a solid introduction to the subject of reconnaissance. There are extensive endnotes that contain interesting source citations, subject related facts, photographs, illustrations, and references to further readings. Each chapter contains a review of key concepts as well as few study questions and learning activities that will assist students build their knowledge of the craft and improve their field practice.

ABOUT THE REVIEWER

Dr Patrick F Walsh is Associate Professor of Intelligence and Security Studies at the Australian Graduate School of Policing and Security, Charles Sturt University, Sydney. Associate Professor Walsh is a former government intelligence officer who has written numerous articles and chapters on a range of intelligence reform issues that span the Five-Eyes intelligence community. His recent study into intelligence—*Intelligence and Intelligence Analysis*—was published by Routledge (2011). He is also the discipline head for the intelligence studies program at Charles Sturt University.

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