

The Network by Jason Elliot.

Bloomsbury 2010.

The Network is a thriller written in the period before the terrorist attacks on New York and Washington of September 2001. Anthony Taverner, a former army officer, is recruited by the British security services to go to Afghanistan to destroy a stockpile of land to air anti-aircraft missiles, Stingers, originally supplied by the CIA to the mujahideen who were fighting the Soviet invasion.

The Network tells the tale of Taverner's recruitment, his severe physical and mental testing and training for his mission, the pressures he has to withstand not only from his overt employers, the SIS, but also from the network led by his shadowy friend the Baroness. How he negotiates all of these things cannot be revealed in a review without giving away some essential plot detail!

However, there is an intriguing endorsement on the book's front cover by Dame Stella Rimington, now a novelist herself but formerly head of MI5, and the story has a huge sense of authenticity to it, indicating either superb research or some real insight into the workings of the intelligence services in general and their actions before 9/11 in particular.

This is a terrific story and an excellent thriller that will delight all devotees of the genre.

Rabbi Dr Charles H Middleburgh