



# The Operators: The Wild and Terrifying Inside Story of America's War in Afghanistan

*Michael Hastings*

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General Stanley McChrystal, the innovative, forward-thinking commanding general of international and U.S. forces in Afghanistan, was living large. He was better known to some as Big Stan, M4, Stan, and his loyal staff liked to call him a "rock star." During a spring 2010 trip across Europe to garner additional allied help for the war effort, McChrystal was accompanied by journalist Michael Hastings of *Rolling Stone*. For days, Hastings looked on as McChrystal and his staff let off steam, partying and openly bashing the Obama administration for what they saw as a lack of leadership. When Hastings's piece appeared a few months later, it set off a political firestorm: McChrystal was ordered to Washington, where he was fired unceremoniously.

In *The Operators*, Hastings picks up where his *Rolling Stone* coup ended. He gives us a shocking behind-the-scenes portrait of our military commanders, their high-stakes maneuvers and often bitter bureaucratic infighting. Hastings takes us on patrol missions in the Afghan hinterlands, to late-night bull sessions of senior military advisors, to hotel bars where spies and expensive hookers participate in nation-building gone awry. And as he weighs the merits and failings of old-school generals and the so-called COINdinistas-the counterintelligence experts-Hastings draws back the curtain on a hellish complexity and, he fears, an unwinnable war.

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