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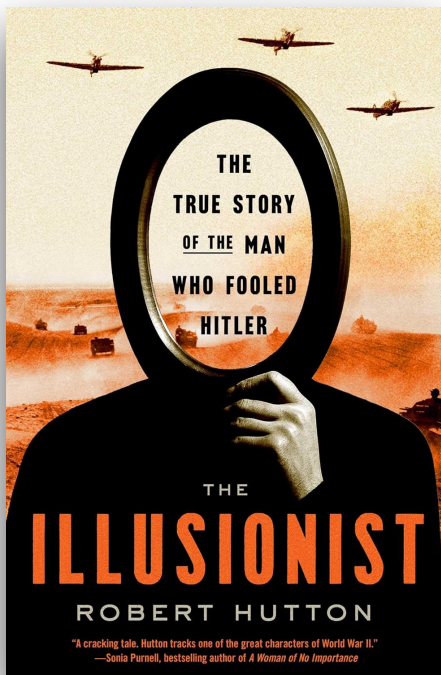
Weekly Intelligence Notes Short-form Book Review (February 2025)

The Illusionist: The True Story of the Man Who Fooled Hitler

by Robert Hutton
Pegasus Books
03 September 2024

Review by **Jeffrey Uncapher***
Former defense industry reporter,
longtime AFIO member

First, this is a very well researched book on the life and times of Dudley Clark and his A Force, set against the backdrop of wartime Cairo and the events in the Middle East. Clark, an obscure British military officer, was born into a successful family who raised him to become a young subaltern in the First World War. Due to fortuitous circumstances of his upbringing, he developed a lifelong interest in the theatre, magic and the arts of illusion, which he put to use in operations during the war. Using excellently sourced notes from family members and friends, Clark is described as a very bright and focused man who knew that creating illusions in the mind of his audience was key to controlling their reactions or, in the case of war, their actions.



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The book is replete with examples of tradecraft, on all sides, that shifted the fortunes of war at critical times. The insights of Japanese intelligence gathering is particularly interesting. Hutton fleshes out incidents such as the posting of Colonel Bonner Fellers to Cairo and the impact of the Italians copying the American code books, which lead to Rommel receiving his intelligence on US interests as fast as Washington DC did until the British figured out what was going wrong in the desert. The cast of characters in this passion play are a fascinating group of spooks as well. The work that Clark did was replicated many times over as the war progressed and eventually his deceptions became more macabre and well known.

Mr Hutton has written a beautiful tribute to a most fascinating man, who cross-dressed (his arrest by the Spanish police for that practice did not phase him nor his handlers for

long). The book is impeccably sourced and fills a much needed gap in the understanding of the war in the Middle East and Africa. Mr. Hutton is a fine writer and great researcher. This is an excellent book.

Jeffrey Uncapher is a former reporter in the defense industry and aerospace realm. He has published works in magazines, including *Defense Daily*, *Military Space*, and *Special Warfare*. He served in the US military and in the community for the last thirty five years. He is a long term member of AFIO and has a special interest in HUMINT.