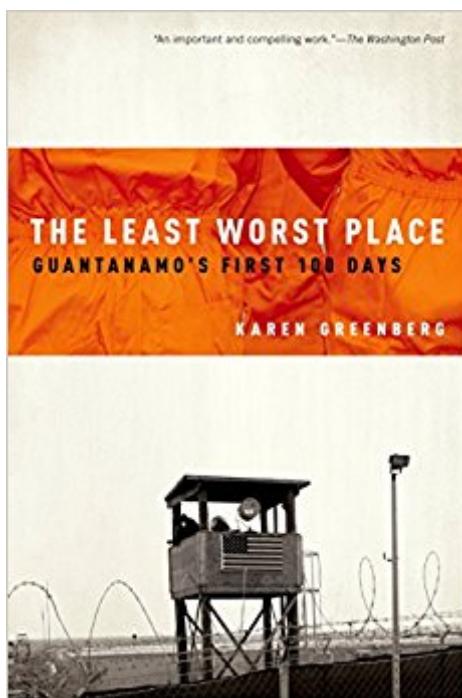


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# The Least Worst Place: Guantanamo's First 100 Days



## **Synopsis**

Named one of the Washington Post Book World's Best Books of 2009, *The Least Worst Place* offers a gripping narrative account of the first one hundred days of Guantanamo. Greenberg, one of America's leading experts on the Bush Administration's policies on terrorism, tells the story through a group of career officers who tried--and ultimately failed--to stymie the Pentagon's desire to implement harsh new policies in Guantanamo and bypass the Geneva Conventions. Peopled with genuine heroes and villains, this narrative of the earliest days of the post-9/11 era centers on the conflicts between Gitmo-based Marine officers intent on upholding the Geneva Accords and an intelligence unit set up under the Pentagon's aegis. The latter ultimately won out, replacing transparency with secrecy, military protocol with violations of basic operation procedures, and humane and legal detainee treatment with harsh interrogation methods and torture. Greenberg's riveting account puts a human face on this little-known story, revealing how America first lost its moral bearings in the wake of 9/11.

## **Book Information**

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## Customer Reviews

For those interested in the history of Guantanamo, this book is a must-read. The author gets a variety of interesting insights from the first commander of Guantanamo and his key staff assistants. I recommend this book and "Terror Courts" by Jess Bravin to get a good understanding of how the detention center at Guantanamo came to be.

Had to read this for class. I had no idea all things took place. I was only in the 8 grade when 9/11 happened. It was interesting to learn about all the things that happens after.

VERY INTERESTING AND INSIGHTFUL AS IT "CAPTURES THE MOMENT" IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING 9/11.....EVERYONE NEEDS TO BE REMINDED OF THE CONFUSION, CONCERNS AND UNCERTAINTY ABOUT HOW TO DEAL WITH A VIRTUALLY UNPRECEDENTED NATIONAL SECURITY CRISIS OF ENORMOUS PROPORTIONS...."LEAST-WORST PLACE" GOES A LONG WAY TOWARDS ACCOMPLISHING THAT.....EVERYONE EXPRESSING A VIEW TODAY ABOUT WHAT WAS DONE BACK THEN SHOULD INVEST A FEW HOURS IN FIRST READING THIS UNIQUE BOOK.....WELL DONE

The book is a representation of how Guantanamo Bay became ground zero for the war on Terrorism.

The creation of Camp X-Ray, Guantanamo, was in haste. There was no administrative consensus as to the status of detainees, and hence no standard for how they were to be treated while in detention. Soldiers trained to guard the camp, and contractors employed to build it, were advised only that the detainees would be "the worst of the worst"--hardened Taliban/al-Qaida terrorists, with totally fanatical zeal to kill. After the logistical achievement of building a maximum security detention center in so little time (2 months) the first detainees arrived from Bagram AFB, Afghanistan: in most cases the staff at Camp X-Ray knew nothing about them: in most cases, even their language was a mystery (few spoke Arabic). The circumstances of their capture or their personal effects were unknown to anyone, and the Pentagon refused to support any policy measures that would pin down their legal status. The staff initially sought to create a detention facility that would comply with the Geneva Conventions and the Uniform Code of Military Justice. After the first few months, the priorities of the Guantanamo Base were changed. Initially left on its own, in legal and administrative limbo, the local staff had struggled to find the appropriate balance of control and humane treatment

for prisoners. In March '02, however, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld took a direct interest in the center and its ability to validate his narrative of the Global War on Terror. At all times, officers in the chain of command were eager to prove their usefulness to the nation by jumping through whatever hoops Rumsfeld held out.

In *The Least Worst Place*, Greenberg presents a detailed history, in strikingly readable format, of the way in which one of the nation's most embarrassing mistakes came to be. From Greenberg's description the reader discovers, first, that the detention mission in Guantanamo did not have to devolve into indignity (although what caused it to do so, namely the creation of an unlawful interrogation facility, may have been the intent of its creators from the very beginning); second, that what caused it to devolve was the hijacking of a military mission away from the professional military leadership by civilian leadership; third, the efforts of on-the-ground, military leadership to maintain a lawful, upstanding detention facility; and fourth, the efforts and manipulations by the administration to undermine the ability of the military to do so. Greenberg's book is vital not only to an understanding of the mistakes and abuses of the past administration, but in order to understand how those mistakes could have been avoided, how they can be in the future, and what about our system works well. While many may find the history outlined in this book to be a source of anger and frustration, it may also be a source of optimism; about the professionalism that can be, and historically has been, created in our military, and about the possibility for our country to handle war and detention in a manner that we can be proud of. To address these issues, *The Least Worst Place* follows not only the facts but also the people involved. Greenberg's description of the marines, soldiers and JAG lawyers at Guantanamo makes the book interesting and easy to read. I recommend it wholeheartedly to anyone with any interest in the subject whatsoever.

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