

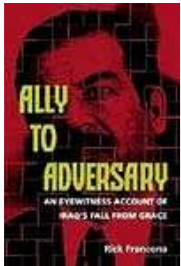
Rick Francona

Intelligence officer, media analyst, author

Combat operations, covert action, clandestine intelligence missions, diplomatic assignments...

Rick Francona brings over twenty-five years of political-military experience in the Middle East to his analysis of the challenges for American foreign policy in this volatile yet critical region.

Lieutenant Colonel Rick Francona is a retired U.S. Air Force intelligence officer, having served with the National Security Agency, the Defense Intelligence Agency, and the Central Intelligence Agency. His tours of duty include Iraq, Syria, Jordan, Lebanon, and Saudi Arabia, with operational travel in virtually every country in the Middle East.



During the last year of the Iran-Iraq war in 1988, Rick served at the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad as a liaison officer to the Iraqi armed forces intelligence service, where he served in the field with the Iraqi army and flew with the Iraqi Air Force. His personal observations were critical to discovering Iraqi chemical weapons use against Iranian troops. Throughout the first Gulf War he served as the personal interpreter and advisor on Iraq to General Norman Schwarzkopf. Rick's book, *Ally to Adversary*, details his experiences with the Iraqis, from working with them in Baghdad in the 1980's, to fighting them in Desert Storm.

After the war, he served in northern Iraq with the Central Intelligence Agency, where he narrowly escaped an attempt on his life by Iraqi agents. During these operations, Rick participated in the attempt to overthrow Saddam Hussein in the 1990's and was involved in the escape of an Iraqi scientist and his family from Iraq to freedom in the United States.

From 2003 to 2008, Rick was a Middle East military analyst for NBC News. In addition, Rick has spoken to numerous conventions and educational institutions.

Presentation Topics

Challenges and Opportunities in the Middle East for the Administration

As the Barack Obama administration takes office, it will be faced with a host of challenges in the Middle East - war in Iraq and Afghanistan, the stalled Middle East peace process, ascendancy of Iran as a regional power broker, piracy on oil shipping lanes, etc. There are opportunities here to address many of these issues.

Middle East Terrorism and Its Challenges for American Law Enforcement

Terrorism and the Middle East seem to go hand-in-hand, but is there still a domestic threat to the United States? Rick examines the roots of terrorism in the region, a brief overview of the "spillover" events that have touched both America and Americans, provides an analysis of potential future threats, and address the challenges for law enforcement in this country.

The Levant – Can't we all just get along?

As recent events have shown, the Levant - Israel, Lebanon and Syria - continues to be a volatile region with the potential to destabilize the entire Middle East. With first-hand experience in these countries - arrested and detained in two - Rick is uniquely qualified to delve into the roots of the conflict in a gripping, direct, factual, but no-holds-barred manner.

Iran – Nukes or Kooks?

It can be argued that since 1945, American foreign policy in the Middle East - specifically the Gulf - has been about Iran. Rick has watched - with his own eyes - Iranian operations in the Gulf, Iraq, Syria and Lebanon. With his unique background, Rick puts into context a problem Americans must address.

Iraq – From the Ottomans to the Americans

An artificial country created in the aftermath of World War I combining disparate ethnic and religious groups, Iraq's history is one of bloodshed – Turkish, British, Arab, Kurdish, Persian and now American. Rick Francona was personally involved in the relationship between Iraq and the United States since the 1980's. Often humorous, often critical, always pointed, Rick goes beyond the headlines and brings the story he lived to life.

Oil and Water – The Other Tap

America's - and the West's - vital interest in the Middle East is often cited as access to oil - a fair statement. The Middle East itself is more concerned with another tap - the water tap.