



Spies in the Himalayas: Secret Missions and Perilous Climbs (Modern War Studies) (Modern War Studies (Hardcover))

M. S. Kohli, Mohan S. Kohli

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In the towering mountains of northern India, a chilling chapter was written in the history of international espionage.

After the Chinese detonated their first nuclear test in 1964, America and India, which had just fought a border war with its northern neighbor, were both justifiably concerned. The CIA knew it needed more information on China's growing nuclear capability but had few ways of peeking behind the Bamboo Curtain. Because of the extreme remoteness of Chinese testing grounds, conventional surveillance in this pre-satellite era was next to impossible.

The solution to this intelligence dilemma was a joint American-Indian effort to plant a nuclear-powered sensing device on a high Himalayan peak in order to listen into China and monitor its missile launches. It was not a job that could be carried out by career spies, requiring instead the special skills possessed only by accomplished

mountaineers. For this mission, cloaks and daggers were to be replaced by crampons and ice axes.

Spies in the Himalayas chronicles for the first time the details of these death-defying expeditions sanctioned by U.S. and Indian intelligence, telling the story of clandestine climbs and hair-raising exploits. Led by legendary Indian mountaineer Mohan S. Kohli, conqueror of Everest, the mission was beset by hazardous climbs, weather delays, aborted attempts, and even missing radioactive materials that may or may not still pose a contamination threat to Indian rivers.

Kept under wraps for over a decade, these operations came to light in 1978 and have been long rumored among mountaineers, but here are finally given book-length treatment. *Spies in the Himalayas* provides an inside look at a CIA mission from participants who weren't agency employees, drawing on diaries from several of the climbers to offer impressions not usually recorded in covert operations. A host of photos and maps puts readers on the slopes as the team attempts repeatedly to plant the sensor on a Himalayan summit.

An adventure story as well as a new chapter in the history of espionage, this book should appeal to readers who enjoyed Jon Krakauer's *Into Thin Air* and to anyone who enjoys a great spy story.

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