

Chasing Shadows. A Special Agent's Lifelong Hunt to bring a Cold War Killer to Justice.

By Fred Burton and John Bruning

Published by Palgrave Macmillan (ISBN: 978 0 230 62055 1)

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Fred Burton is one of the world's experts on security, terrorists and terrorist organisations. He was deputy director of the Counterterrorism Division of the State Department's Diplomatic Security Service (DSS) and is currently vice president for counter terrorism at Strategic Forecasting (Stratfor). His co-author is John Bruning, a military historian who has previously cooperated with Burton as co-author of Ghost.

Chasing Shadows reads like a classic action packed political thriller but the difference is that this is a true story concerned with the murder some 37 years ago of an Israeli Air Force Colonel Josef Alon in Bethesda, Maryland. Alon was the Israeli air attaché in Washington when in July 1973 he was shot in the driveway of his home in Bethesda just a few streets away from where the teenage Fred Burton was living. The murder had a profound effect on Burton in that it shattered his illusions of safety in this sleepy Maryland town. In 2007, having left his special agent career behind, he decided to reopen the Alon case.

The case was initially investigated by the Montgomery County Police Department (MCPD), which Burton joined in 1981. The crime had never been solved and quickly forgotten. What Burton found strange was that the case file was full of curious dead ends and it was this aspect that piqued his interest in the case. When later he was serving with the DSS he dug deeper into the case files and discovered that this crime was no random act of violence. He eventually acquired the entire FBI case file as well as some diplomatic documents relating to the case. Over the years he developed leads and discovered a tangled web of international espionage, vengeance, and multiple cover-ups by nations that should have known better. On promotion to deputy director of counter terrorism at DSS, Burton tried to reopen the case formally - but was stonewalled at every turn. In 1973, immediately after the murder of Alon, his widow Dvora and two daughters returned to Israel where they settled. Dvora was unable to get any answers to her questions in Tel Aviv and it appeared that the Israeli government had never investigated the murder of one of their own. Indeed, the more she persisted in raising the matter the more firmly she was rebuffed and ultimately she was threatened by her own government for simply asking questions about her husband's murder. Following a press campaign to attempt to get the government to reveal what they knew, Mossad put the daughters under surveillance. Before her death Dvora revealed her own theory for Alon's death. She believed Alon had discovered a joint conspiracy between the US and Israel to allow the Arabs to strike first in the 1973 war when indeed the Arabs did achieve strategic surprise. She believed the Americans had killed him with Israeli assistance because the US wanted to see how its latest military hardware given to the Israelis would perform against the latest Soviet equipment operated by Egypt and Syria.

As time went on Burton became ever more determined to solve the case and recruited help from other retired US agency officers who enthusiastically carried out much of the detailed painstaking research that became necessary. He decided that the only way to progress the case was to return to tried and tested detective techniques. The more he delved into the archives the more surprising the information revealed. For instance, why had the FBI gone against its own rules in destroying the physical evidence from the murder scene when it was still classified as an unsolved crime? What was Alon's real role in the Israeli embassy and what was his relationship with the US Air Force? Was Alon a Mossad agent and why was he apparently recruiting agents within the US? Why was a senior US Air Force (USAF) officer who worked in the Directorate of Plans at the Pentagon present at Alon's funeral in Israel? If Alon was assassinated who ordered it and who planned it? Who were the killers and what was their fate?

The answers to these questions and many more that arose as the story unfolds had their roots in air battles that had taken place over Vietnam and Egypt, and in street gun battles in Beirut. Its tentacles embraced the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO), the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) and the murderous Black September Organisation (BSO), as well as the intrigue and feuding between them. Intricately woven into this plot are the activities of both the CIA and FBI.

Burton and his associates experienced many frustrating periods and dead ends as the case progressed. However, their dogged pursuit and the use of personal contacts both in the US and the Middle East succeeded in providing the evidence they needed to bring the case to a conclusion. Despite Burton's determination to solve the case and provide Alon's daughters with closure, towards the end he had to take account of the personal risk to his contacts in the Middle East who had provided some of the critical evidence, and not put them in harm's way for further information. Because the FBI had destroyed the physical evidence so many years earlier the case was never going to finish with a conviction in a US court of law. In the end after 16 years of work on the case, the killer was brought to a form of justice - but not in the way that Burton had expected.

The twists and turns of this true story also reveal the arguments that occurred in the USAF over the poor performance of US aircraft in Vietnam pitted against Soviet fighters. The US Navy fighters and the Israeli pilots were performing vastly better against the same Soviet fighters in their respective theatres. This resulted in an extended struggle by the USAF pilots flying the aircraft to get their very senior masters in the higher reaches of the USAF, who were determined to ignore them, to change the method of training. Also revealed to the reader are the organisations and complex interrelationships between the PLO, PFLP and the BSO. The PLO always claimed that the BSO was not connected or controlled by them in any way. This is now shown to be completely untrue and that the chief planner of BSO was held in high esteem by Yasser Arafat. The internecine strife between Arabs and the nature and extent of Mossad operations against the Palestinian organisations is an essential element of Burton's investigation.

This book represents an extraordinary history of Fred Burton's determined pursuit of justice in the unsolved case of a murder in his hometown when he was a teenager. It demonstrates the uses and abuses of international power and how international loyalties are bought and sold. The

story is told in the manner of political thriller with all the twists and turns one would expect. It is constructed and written to draw the reader in and who will inevitably find it difficult to put down.