



I Could Tell You But Then You Would Have to Be Destroyed By Me: Emblems from the Pentagon's Black World

By Trevor Paglen

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Updated with New Information and Additional Patches

They're on the shoulders of all military personnel: patches showing what a soldier's unit does. But what if that's top secret?

“A glimpse of [the Pentagon’s] dark world through a revealing lens—patches—the kind worn on military uniforms. . . The book offers not only clues into the nature of the secret programs, but also a glimpse of zealous male bonding among the presumed elite of the military-industrial complex. The patches often feel like fraternity pranks gone ballistic.”

—William Broad, *The New York Times*

I COULD TELL YOU... is a bestselling collection of more than seventy military patches representing secret government projects. Here author/photographer/investigator Trevor Paglen explores classified weapons projects and intelligence operations by scrutinizing their own imagery and jargon, disclosing new facts about important military units, which are here known by peculiar names (“Goat Suckers,” “Grim Reapers,” “Tastes Like Chicken”) and illustrated with occult symbols and ridiculous cartoons. The precisely photographed patches—worn by military personnel working on classified missions, such as those at the legendary Area 51—reveal much about a strange and eerie world about which little was previously known.

“A fresh approach to secret government.”

—Steven Aftergood, *The Federation of American Scientists*

“An impressive collection.”

—Justin Rood, *ABC News*

“A fascinating set of shoulder patches.”

—Stephen Colbert, *The Colbert Report*

“I was fascinated... [Paglen] has assembled about 40 colorful patch insignia from secret, military ‘black’ programs that are hardly ever discussed in public. He has plenty of regalia from the real denizens of Area 51.”

—**Alex Beam, *The Boston Globe***

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Editorial Review

Review

Praise for Trevor Paglen and I COULD TELL YOU...

“ Gives readers a peek into the shadows . . . Department of Defense spokesman Bob Mehal told *Newsweek* that it ‘would not be prudent to comment on what patches did or did not represent classified units.’ That’s OK. Some mysteries are more fun when they stay unsolved.”

—Karen Pinchin, *Newsweek*

“An art book that presents peculiar shoulder patches created for the weird and top secret programs funded by the Pentagon’s black budget... an achievement.”

—Timothy Buckwalter, *San Francisco Chronicle*

“ Some of the worst crimes in the American landscape are hiding in plain sight, and nobody has ever pursued them more thoroughly or explained them more chillingly and engagingly than Trevor Paglen. What he is doing is important, fascinating, and groundbreaking.”

—Rebecca Solnit, author of *Wanderlust*

“ The iconography of the United States military. Not the mainstream military, with its bars and ribbons and medals, but the secret or ‘black projects’ world, which may or may not involve contacting aliens, building undetectable spy aircraft, and experimenting with explosives that could make atomic bombs look like firecrackers. Here, mysterious characters and cryptic symbols hint at intrigue much deeper than rank, company, and unit.”

—UTNE Reader

“ Of course, issuing patches for a covert operation sounds like a joke . . . but truth be told, these days everything is branded. Military symbols are frequently replete with heraldic imagery—some rooted in history, others based on contemporary popular arts that feature comic characters—but these enigmatic dark-op images, in some cases probably designed by the participants themselves, are more personal, and also more disturbing, than most.”

—Steven Heller, *The New York Times Book Review*

“ Trevor Paglen gets into the black heart of America’s black sites. There is no better guide to this great American mystery. What goes on inside these bases will determine the future of warfare—and who we are—for the rest of the century.”

—Robert Baer, former case officer at the CIA and author of *See No Evil: The True Story of a Ground Soldier in the CIA’s War on Terrorism*

About the Author

Trevor Paglen is an artist, writer, and geographer. He is the author of *Torture Taxi: On the Trail of the CIA’s Rendition Flights* (coauthored with A.C. Thompson), *Blank Spots on a Map: The Dark Geography of the Pentagon’s Secret World*, and *Invisible: Covert Operations and Classified Landscapes*. He lives and works in Oakland and New York City.

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