

Jacket Test of [Skunk Works](#)

Skunk Works is the true story, told for the first time, of America's most secret and successful aerospace operation. As recounted by Ben Rich, the operation's brilliant boss for nearly two decades, the story of Lockheed's legendary Skunk Works is a high-stakes drama of cold war confrontations and Gulf War air combat, of extraordinary feats of engineering and human achievement against fantastic odds .

The windowless Skunk Works hangar, tucked into a corner of the Burbank, California, airport, produced the most spectacular aviation triumphs of the twentieth century. Ben Rich arrived in 1954 as an entry-level engineer, awed by the commanding presence of Clarence "Kelly" Johnson, founder of the operation and one of aviation's pioneers. Rich's first project was the U-2 spy plane, built for the CIA, which overflew the Soviet Union at supposedly unreachable heights and photographed its most sensitive military secrets, resulting in the greatest espionage coup of the cold war. Among the others that followed, the SR-71 Blackbird stands out: a reconnaissance airplane right out of Flash Gordon, which ranged at heights and speeds long thought unattainable - faster than a rifle bullet, at more than three times the speed of sound. And a crowning achievement is the revolutionary F-117 Stealth fighter virtually undetectable on enemy radar screens, that flew the most dangerous missions of Operation Desert Storm with such stunning accuracy it changed forever the way air combat will be conducted.

Skunk Works is dramatic and immediate, direct from the cockpits of these astonishing aircraft, with first- person narratives from the CIA and Air Force pilots who flew the many classified, risky missions. Filled with telling personal anecdotes and high adventure, Skunk Works is a tribute to genius and patriotism in the unrelenting contest for mastery of the skies.

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