

Heady war games

THRILLER Like its prequel, it keeps you hooked. **TANYA THOMAS**

"All the characters... and organisations described or mentioned in this book are fictitious, or have been fictitiously used and any resemblance... is unintentional." Mukul Deva begins the second in his four-part thriller series with this disclaimer. And with reason - the book has used 'fictionalised' real-life characters for good measure. Not least being the "normally placid", "soft-spoken" Indian Prime Minister, Dr. Singh; the nameless 'big man' President who lives in a "large, white house" and several not-so-subtle allusions.

Plotting away

'Salim...' relates quite a prescient tale, foreseeing the period when the world's most-wanted terrorist (described to the reader as wearing "flowing white robes" with a "flowing beard") has finally been captured. Unfortunately, he dies due to natural causes just after the Americans get their hands on him; and his ardent, retributive *jihadi*-followers promise the world unending bloodbaths. To fulfill this morbid vow, the ISI, now equipped with nuclear and biological warfare carries out global terror attacks to annihilate the *kafir* (non-believers). As the strikes begin, the Indian military top brass and the elite security squad, Force 22 put their heads together to track down the lethal *jihadis* and save creation from impending nuclear destruction. The book, like its prequel *Lashkar*, is racy and



keeps you hooked. Deva deconstructs the workings of the army into comprehensible components, and with the same clarity also dissects the mind of the terrorist. He explains in great detail the oil politics that fuelled the Iraq war, global power plays, and the liaison between politics and business. The only dampeners however are some typographical errors and instances when his characters, in the heat of battle, suddenly break into incongruous discourses on religion, love and peace.

With its supersonic jets, intellectual war games, and adrenaline rush, this book is definitely written for the movies.

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