

# THE COVER-UP GENERAL

Edwin Giltay

*the  
forbidden  
book!*

The non-fiction tell-all that exposes  
a sinister Dutch espionage affair

ONCE BANNED IN HOLLAND

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NOW RELEASED IN ENGLISH



## The Cover-up General





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Edwin Giltay

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*In memory of my late grandfather Frans Erkelens,  
Colonel, court martial member*

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# Introduction

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In 1998 I worked at cable television provider Casema in Delft as a help-desk employee. While employed there I became unwittingly involved in government intrigue: a power struggle within Dutch military intelligence was fought out on the company floor. *The Cover-up General* reports on this and follows the ongoing developments in this unsettling affair.

This spy thriller is an autobiography describing my experiences with secret services. I also explain the background to what happened to me. In doing so, however, I did not want to make this affair any bigger or more political than it is. While it is true that domestic and foreign media repeatedly call *The Cover-up General* a ‘Srebrenica book,’ this designation gives a somewhat distorted picture. It describes an affair that takes place in the Dutch lowlands and focuses only in part on the withholding of an infamous photographic film of the fall of Srebrenica.

While no details of the actual story are invented, some people have been given a different name to protect their privacy. For example, the names of unsuspecting citizens working at Casema, who encountered a genuine spies’ battle being fought over their heads, have been anonymized.

The text has been updated. Following the first Dutch edition, chapters have been added explaining new developments. In addition, when the second edition went out of print I rewrote a number of passages for reasons of improved clarity. In the third Dutch edition – of which you are now reading the English translation – some paragraphs on side issues have been deleted and others added. Thus, I have put to paper what it was like to be targeted by the State of the Netherlands. Although emptying this goblet of poison was painful at the time, it is liberating to give it a place now (pages [99–103](#)).

As a citizen, it is not easy to defend oneself against a state apparatus. However, support from politicians, journalists and academics makes it more burdensome to disrupt a citizen's life without repercussions. To gather this support the editors of this book worked diligently. And with success – even before publication, this book received the blessing of prominent figures.

The reader may not have failed to notice the many endorsements in this book. These are broadly presented here less for the sake of aggrandizement than out of a consideration for, as it were, a shielding legitimacy: as the author of a spy exposé, it is – unfortunately – necessary for me to have a ring of protection.

On page [216](#) one will find the notes section containing references to correspondence, reports, parliamentary and legal documents, newspaper articles, etc. In addition, there are two Word files that form the basis of this book: the first is a document with painstaking notes prepared when I applied to join the armed forces in 1998. When ultimately confronted with military intelligence machinations at Casema, I subsequently recorded my observations in a journal that likewise details the plot twists in this saga.

I did not rush the writing of *The Cover-up General*. Many friends and associates assisted in bringing this sensitive affair into the limelight, in a diligent and responsible manner.

Thus, I thank Dutch journalists Mark Baker and Arnoud van Soest for their editorial help, as well as news photographer John Melskens for the author's portrait taken at the Dutch Ministry of Defence in The Hague. This international edition of *The Cover-up General* would not have seen the light of day without the editorial help of Irish philosopher Michael Wynne. He has spent many late nights correcting my English on his laptop – thank you, Mike!

The synopsis of this book can be found on page [257](#), followed by synopses in Serbo-Croat-Bosnian, Dutch, German and Russian. I would like to thank the freelance translators of the summaries for their conscientious work: Milan Petrović (English to Bosnian), Mareike Kraatz (English to German) and Yurri Shynkarenko (English to Russian).

In addition, I am grateful to Tom Mikkers, Metje Blaak, Harry

van Bommel, Jeroen Stam and Christ Klep for their advice. Valuable support also came from Bosnia veterans Colonel Charlef Brantz and Derk Zwaan, Balkan activists Caspar ten Dam, Jolies Heij, Dzevad Kurić and Jehanne van Woerkom, Srebrenica lawyers Marco Gerritsen and Simon van der Sluijs, as well as my late Uncle Frans Erkelens Jr. and his impresario Ian Knoop.

I am also indebted to my lawyer Jurian van Groenendaal. After this book became the subject of lawsuits in 2015, he prevented it from being covered up forever.

Related news videos and background articles can be found on the website [thecoverupgeneral.com](http://thecoverupgeneral.com).

— *Edwin Giltay,*  
*The Hague, Netherlands, 2024*



# Part One

1997 – 2014

*'Every person remembers some moment in their life where they witnessed some injustice, big or small, and looked away because the consequences of intervening seemed too intimidating. But there's a limit to the amount of incivility and inequality and inhumanity that each individual can tolerate.'*

— Edward Snowden

# Character

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**D**ecember 1997, I spot a recruitment advertisement for an officer's position in the Dutch Marine Corps, the elite corps of the Royal Netherlands Navy. Armed marines are depicted, above the slogan, 'The Navy, not that bad an idea'. The athletic challenge of this combat unit is appealing. Just like my grandfather Frans Erkelens, I aspire to serve my country as a military officer.

Several months later, on 3 April 1998, I attend an information meeting at Amsterdam's Naval Barracks.<sup>1</sup> Lieutenant Commander Hamaken explains at the barracks what the job entails. He does not forget to add that a soldier risks giving his life for his country – a dramatic turn of phrase, yet he chuckles at his own remarks. Nevertheless, he emphasises we should keep this in mind before applying.

The question whether I would be willing to lay down my life for my country, takes me by surprise. At 27 years old I have not contemplated this yet. So far, I have been working mainly as a Dutch technical writer, not a profession in which you put yourself in jeopardy. I take notes during the lecture, something I am used to, so I can refresh my memory later on.

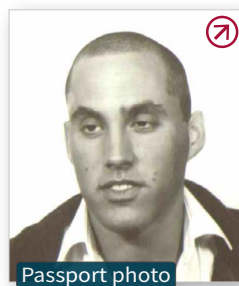
When Lieutenant Commander Hamaken notices this, he stops laughing. His tone turns serious and referring to the peacekeeping operations in the former Yugoslavia, he tells us that in extreme cases a soldier on duty can die.

'Have you taken all that down accurately, Mister Giltay?' The officer addresses me firmly. 'Yes,' I reply calmly; 'I am writing it down as I consider what you are saying to be important.' It certainly is, judging by my grandfather's experiences. As a prisoner of war, he was tortured; in vain the Japanese army tried to break him. He had

been deployed as a forced labourer in the construction of the Burma Railway,<sup>2</sup> a war crime claiming the lives of nearly three thousand Dutch soldiers.

Back home, I reflect profoundly on the ultimate consequence of being sent on a military mission. On the Ministry of Defence's website, I read that the armed forces are tasked with defending our freedom and democracy, as well as advancing the international rule of law. Justice is not a given, as evidenced by the world war terrors my family had to endure, and which Queen Wilhelmina also outlined in a personal letter of condolence to Grandpa in 1947.<sup>3</sup> The deployment of the Dutch Armed Forces appeals to me. I decide to apply in order to undertake these duties, whatever the consequences may be.

I fill in an application form, which comes with several attachments. As requested, I enclose a passport photograph. I also need to sign up front to swear allegiance to the Queen, obey the laws and submit myself to military discipline. And I have not even been admitted to the ranks. Still, I sign the allegiance, so help me God Almighty.<sup>4</sup>



Meanwhile, I have taken up a new temp job. On 8 June, I will commence at cable operator Casema, which offers cable TV, telephone and internet services.<sup>5</sup> As a telephone helpdesk assistant in the Telesales department, I speak with potential customers interested in internet access, and arrange appointments in case technicians are required to make house calls.

The department is located on the fifth floor of Casema headquarters on the outskirts of the historic town of Delft. I work from Monday to Friday, from six to ten PM. The atmosphere is pleasant, I get along well with everyone, and the pay allows me to make ends meet. Evening

hours pay overtime, so I receive a 30-hour salary for a 20-hour job. It's perfect for me – I can work out all afternoon.

On 11 June, I check in at the Amsterdam Navy Barracks for the psychological assessment of my suitability as an aspiring marine officer.<sup>6</sup> Ms P. Strijbosch explains to me that only information I provide myself will be used. She also guarantees that it will be treated confidentially. That sounds fair and square, but during the interview it becomes clear she herself does not adhere to this notion. She raises a few questions indicating that she has knowledge of my personal antecedents. This is rather surprising, as I have not yet given permission to be screened by Military Intelligence. Yet despite my dismay, I keep quiet about it.

Among other things, Strijbosch asks about my current job. I tell her I started working as a helpdesk assistant in Casema's internet department, much to my delight. It strikes me that the military psychologist is taking notes most decisively, even jotting down information on the company. To ease tensions, I jest: 'Would you perhaps like to come and work at my place?' Strijbosch smiles and goes on taking notes.

In the afternoon, I am called in for the results. A colleague of Strijbosch, Mr P. van der Pol, accompanies me to a room. He comes right to the point. He thinks I am unfit to become a marine officer because – and here is the zinger – my character is supposedly 'too strong'. Marine Corps drill instructors would be 'unable to break me'. He thinks my character is 'too well developed' and my broad work and life experience is commendable.

Not only does the recruitment psychologist put a remarkably positive spin on me being rejected, but he also surprises me by bringing up a private matter. Although I did not disclose my sexual orientation, he tells me that while training Marine Corps officers, the Navy has had bad experiences with 'guys like me'. The psychologist explains that in the Marines, homosexuals are not considered to be one of the boys. As a result, virtually no gay candidates reach the end of the training course. Although Van der Pol knows one gay man who indeed finished the training course, he



felt compelled to leave eventually, having been isolated for a year.

Obviously, homosexuality cannot be used as a reason for rejecting recruits. However, that does not remove the problem of gays not being accepted by the Corps. The psychologist lets on he is not happy with the selection procedure either. He has raised objections regularly, but his superiors never budged: 'Nothing ever changes.'

But how does the director of Recruitment & Selection view this? Van der Pol replies that the latter barely knows what is going on. The psychologist does not think highly of the servicemen working at the naval barracks. 'Softies' they are, posted here because they are unfit to sail.

Being rejected on the grounds that 'my character is too strong', seems a feeble excuse to me. An elite force refusing recruits deemed too strong for warrant officers to handle, is, I think, simply ridiculous. As I tell Van der Pol I will be lodging a formal complaint on the matter, sure enough he appears to appreciate my decision. Without my asking, he gives me a piece of advice: the military is wary of negative publicity – such is to be avoided. Therefore, I should express myself thoughtfully. Van der Pol points out that I am intelligent yet modest. I do not impose myself and put group interests first. These specifics go down well with the Corps.

The next day, I visit my maternal Uncle Frans Erkelens Jr. in his studio in The Hague. Frans is a celebrated painter.<sup>7</sup> Princess Irene, for instance, is an admirer of his,<sup>8</sup> and Queen Mother Juliana opened an exhibition of his work in Amsterdam's *Nieuwe Kerk* ('New Church') in 1981.<sup>9</sup> My uncle would immerse himself in a subject for a while to create a series of paintings about it. Over the years, he drew inspiration from varied themes such as the Battle of Arnhem, the Great Pyramid of Giza and its Sphinx, as well as the Javanese goddess-queen of the South Sea.

Once I explain I was rejected by the Netherlands Marine Corps on the grounds of my character being too strong to be broken, Frans starts laughing. In his opinion, I should be happy with the assessment. Had I not applied to prove my manhood? If anything,

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