



## Operation ARGUS: Maskirovka: Are You Ready for the Truth?

**Willy Mitchell**

iUniverse (May 24, 2018)

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*This is a suspenseful tale whose descriptions of how military men reintegrate into civilian life are particularly authentic.*

Willy Mitchell's dramatic suspense novel *Operation Argus* weaves true experiences and historic events into a military murder mystery.

Mitch and his friends are high-level military men with international influence. They've scattered to the corners of the globe after their service, each navigating postmilitary life in their own way. When one of their own turns up dead under suspicious circumstances, the group reassembles to investigate his death. Each string that they pull is tied to the large fabric of criminality, corruption, and the new technological face of modern warfare.

The story is told primarily through Mitch's point of view. He and his family are its best developed characters. Introspective and flawed, Mitch is a likable hero who leads his team and protects his family. His daughter, Bella, emerges as a strong and confident heroine in her own right; she is the book's emotional link. Her understanding of her military father and his friends develops from her childhood into her young adulthood, where she works as an analyst. It is a mix of admiration, confusion, occasional resentment, and fierce loyalty that is true to military family culture. Mitch and Bella's relationship is touching.

Mitch's friends are introduced via exposition, which imparts their personal histories, physical descriptions, and personality traits. Many struggle with civilian life, introducing themes of loyalty, regret, and the burdens of warfare. As the story moves forward, their characteristics and dialogue become similar; it is difficult to keep track of them as individuals.

Characters continue to be added to the novel as it continues, resulting in a large supporting cast that is unevenly developed. British colloquialisms and Russian terms give some clear cultural identifiers and more unique voices.

Flashbacks are a frequent feature. Transitions to different time periods are inconsistent—clearly labeled in some instances, less obvious in others. Information on military weaponry, slang, and culture from around the world is authentic. The story moves across many countries, involving a variety of governments and organizations; locations are announced in bold with helpful descriptions, but the changes in scenery are still frequent enough to be disorienting.

The novel's direct storytelling moves the action-driven plot forward, though more spiritual and poetic moments are underdeveloped. A rushed ending bounces between the multitude of characters; some resolutions are unnatural. The main story line involving Mitch and his family is wrapped up with room for more adventures.

*Operation Argus* is a suspenseful ensemble military story.

DELIA STANLEY (November 15, 2018)

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