

## **Lawrence Wright's *The Looming Tower* wins 2007 Lionel Gelber Prize for Non-fiction**

March 6, 2007 (Toronto and Washington, D.C.) — Lawrence Wright has won the 2007 Lionel Gelber Prize for his book *The Looming Tower: Al-Qaeda and The Road to 9/11*, published by Alfred A. Knopf. The annual Prize is awarded to the author of the world's best book on international affairs.

Judith Gelber, Chair of the Lionel Gelber Prize Board and niece of Lionel Gelber, announced the winner today in Toronto. The Prize is awarded by The Lionel Gelber Foundation in partnership with the Munk Centre for International Studies at the University of Toronto and Washington-based FOREIGN POLICY magazine.

Lawrence Wright will be in Toronto on Tuesday, March 27, 2007, to accept the \$15,000 Prize and give the fourth annual Lionel Gelber Prize public lecture at the Munk Centre, beginning at 6 p.m. FOREIGN POLICY magazine hosts an event in Washington later in April

Wright worked five years on this meticulously researched, magnificently written analysis of events that led to the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon on Sept. 11, 2001. The story begins with Sayyid Qutb, whose ideas gave birth to what later would be called Islamic militancy, then interweaves the lives of al-Qaeda leaders including Osama bin Laden and John O'Neill, the FBI's counter-terrorism chief.

The Honourable Barbara McDougall, Chair of the Lionel Gelber Prize Jury and Canada's former Secretary of State for External Affairs, says, "Wright takes us on a remarkable journey through the Middle East with this brilliantly reported book that shines light on dark places. He captures the human emotion of his characters, portraying them honestly with the diligence of a brilliant literary craftsman."

Wright also captures the pathos and irony of bin Laden and O'Neill, each on opposite sides of the divide, warily circling one another, each passionately convinced of the righteousness of their convictions. The drama reaches operatic intensity when the suicide bombers are on their way and three times in a speech bin Laden quotes from the fourth sura of the Quran: "Wherever you are, death will find you, even in the looming tower." By this time O'Neill, marginalized by the counter-terrorist bureaucracy, has quit the FBI to work as head of security at the World Trade Center. Three weeks later he dies in the rubble of the twin towers.

A review in Publishers Weekly calls *The Looming Tower* "one of the best books yet on the history of terrorism." The New York Times says it is "a narrative history that possesses all the immediacy and emotional power of a novel, an account that indelibly illustrates how the political and the personal, the public and the private were often inextricably intertwined."

Wright is a staff writer for *The New Yorker*, a member of the Council on Foreign Relations, and a fellow at the Center on Law and Security at New York University School of Law. He taught for two years at the American University in Cairo, where he began learning Arabic. He has written five other works of nonfiction – *City Children*, *Country Summer*; *In the New World*; *Saints and Sinners*; *Remembering Satan*; *Twins*; and a novel titled *God's Favorite*. He is co-writer of the film *The Siege*, is working on a screenplay for MGM on the life of John O'Neill, and this month he opened in an off-Broadway multi-media monologue he wrote titled *My Trip to Al-Qaeda*.

**Other Finalists:**

***Dangerous Nation: America's Place in the world from Its Earliest Days to the Dawn of the Twentieth Century***

Robert Kagan (Alfred A. Knopf)

***Nixon in China: The Week that Changed the World***

Margaret MacMillan (Viking Canada)

***The International Struggle Over Iraq: Politics in the UN Security Council 1980-2005***

David Malone (Oxford)

***Fiasco: The American Military Adventure in Iraq***

Thomas E. Ricks (The Penguin Press)

**Members of the Lionel Gelber Prize Jury:**

**The Honourable Barbara McDougall, Jury Chair**, Canada's former Secretary of State for External Affairs, is an advisor to Toronto-based law firm Aird and Berlis, LLP. She was recently appointed a director of the Ottawa-based International Development Research Centre.

**Warren Bass** is a senior editor at *The Washington Post's* Book World section and served on the 9/11 Commission as a writer and editor of the Commission's final report.

**Bruce Jentleson** is Professor of Public Policy and Political Science at Duke University and Visiting Senior Research Fellow at Oxford University.

**Tod Lindberg** is editor of the Hoover Institution's *Policy Review*, specializing in political theory, American politics, and national security policy.

**Walter Russell Mead** is the Henry A. Kissinger Senior Fellow for U.S. Foreign Policy at the Council on Foreign Relations. He wrote *Special Providence: American Foreign Policy and How It Changed the World*, which won the 2002 Lionel Gelber Prize.

The Lionel Gelber Prize was established in 1989 by Canadian diplomat Lionel Gelber. The Economist has called the Lionel Gelber Prize "the world's most important award for non-fiction."

For further information on the Lionel Gelber Prize:

Diana Crosbie, Crosbie Communications, 416-360-6625 [diana@crosbie.on.ca](mailto:diana@crosbie.on.ca)

The Lionel Gelber Prize website is [www.utoronto.ca/mcis/gelber](http://www.utoronto.ca/mcis/gelber). The website contains background information on the Prize, including previous winners, illustration of this year's winning book cover jury bios, and a brief biography of Lionel Gelber.

Members of the public, who wish to attend the Toronto Public Lecture and Award Ceremony on Tuesday, March 27<sup>th</sup>, are asked to register online on the website [www.utoronto.ca/mcis/gelber](http://www.utoronto.ca/mcis/gelber). The Event begins at 6:00 p.m. followed by a reception and book signing at the Munk Centre, University of Toronto, 1 Devonshire Place.