ENGLISH SYNOPSIS

The Cover-up General

While working at the helpdesk of cable operator Casema (Delft, the Netherlands), I could not imagine getting entangled in an espionage scandal. Military Intelligence fighting an internal power struggle at a private company? Nothing was further from my mind. But that was exactly what happened. Only later did I realise what was behind it all. I wrote down my experiences in the non-fiction thriller The Cover-up General.

From 8 June 1998, I work at Casema in Delft through a job agency, serving internet customers. My ambition, however, is to serve my country. When I apply for a job as a trainee Marine Corps officer, military psychologists compliment me on my broad work and life experience but reject me because my character is assessed as 'too strong to be broken'.

In early July, two temporary employees from a rival job agency join my department. Both are linked to the Dutch Armed Forces:

Barbara Overduyn (34) reveals to everyone that, besides her temporary job, she works for the Dutch military secret service MID. Complaining openly about the MID, she is especially critical of the suppression of the notorious roll of film, which captured the failure of our army's peacekeeping forces in the Bosnian town of Srebrenica, in 1995. Barbara urges me to follow this scandal. According to her, some people in the military are determined to prevent the photos from being published. Yet she and her boss – a brave Marine colonel – are opposing this cover-up, an admirable stance.

Ina (middle-aged) is more aloof. After a slip of the tongue about her husband, she is startled when I inquire about his name and military job. Ina keeps quiet. Yet chatting one day with Barbara about the love of her life, she calls him 'my Ad'. Also, I overhear Ina answer the phone once, saying 'Van Baal' instead of her maiden name, after which she apologises profusely.

On 8 July, my supervisor tells me her staff card is missing. She finds it hard to believe but suspects the card was stolen by Ina.

A few days later, when Barbara is not around, her unusual job is brought up. In jest, I remark: 'She is a spy!' Although it is solely intended as a joke about Barbara, Ina freezes as if she is the one being unmasked. Distrusting

Ina, I decide to sneak up on her at some point, while she is at her desk. Peering over her shoulder, I see Ina jotting down Barbara's remarks on the Srebrenica film roll. I am totally perplexed.

Discussing our careers during our first break together on 14 July, Barbara offers me a job at the MID as an analyst. I would be tasked with writing reports on the deployment of our Armed Forces. Barbara is certain I would be skilled at describing the various warring parties.

The next day, Barbara and I are startled by camera flashes. Ina has just left for the toilet when an intruder takes photos of us sitting at our desks. The spy then flees in a car driven by a henchman. Everyone is shocked – the police are called in. The intruder must have used a staff card, since he entered our building without setting off the alarm. But why? No company secrets are kept on our floor. And why is the number plate of the getaway car not registered anywhere?

I finish my temporary job – Barbara and Ina's job agency is cheaper – and start dating Jasper (21), a former colleague. He informs me that, while at Casema, Barbara has been tearfully complaining that the Head of the MID has dismissed her intelligence superior and that she will leave the military as well.

Concerned about the intrigues, I write to the National Ombudsman, who in turn asks the Minister of Defence for clarification on what happened. Subsequently, an MID report is released in which Barbara confirms having tried to recruit me for the MID, but she also claims that I am 'completely insane' and that I was fired from Casema for 'misconduct'. One wonders *who* is insane here. The fact is, both my job agency and Casema send me references regarding my temporary job.

Meanwhile, through a mutual friend, a high-ranking official within the Dutch domestic secret service BVD explains the intrigues:

While I was applying for a job with the Marines, my background was checked, and my past as a male escort surfaced. The psychologists had to fob me off because of this and find a legal way out. Hence the surreal rejection. Nevertheless, my work and life experience was regarded as useful in intelligence circles. Following the example of the BVD, which had asked me in 1992 to please diplomats sexually, the MID now found it expedient to approach me.

Next, Barbara was deployed at Casema to recruit me. This was, however, primarily a ruse to entrap her, as it would have been easier to just call me. Ina was brought in to infiltrate as well, in order to observe Barbara, as grave doubts had arisen concerning the latter's performance as an undercover agent.

As for Ina, she had no experience as a spy at all. Still, she was assigned to this job by her high-ranking husband, who was in charge of the set-up. Ina quickly compromised herself by stealing the access card for the break-in

and noting down Barbara's breaches of state secrecy. Regardless, the family operation succeeded. Ina's notes and the intruder's photos proving Barbara's controversial infiltration were used to pressure Barbara and her superior to leave the MID. The internal opposition to the Srebrenica cover-up was neutralised, with Barbara suspecting *I* had betrayed her.

In June 1999, I write to the Chief Public Prosecutor about the false MID report, issued by the Minister of Defence. The Head of the MID and his deputy are removed from their posts by the Minister two weeks later. Nonetheless, the National Ombudsman publishes the ministerial libel in his online assessment of the case, without ever having checked it. He ignores the evidence I provided, making it appear as if no intrigues took place.

Other disruption measures are also carried out to silence me: earlier, Barbara had ordered Jasper to stop seeing me – he wrote testimonies to that effect, embarrassing the MID. None of this is looked into any further, not even after an intervention from Her Majesty Queen Beatrix at my request. My BVD contact explains that the national interest outweighs mine.

Because the army top brass continue to deceive the Minister of Defence, he decides to leave office in April 2002. Next, the entire Dutch government resigns over the Srebrenica genocide. The Commander-in-Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army, General Ad van Baal, also steps down. He is pictured on the front page of the national daily *Algemeen Dagblad* under the nickname 'The Cover-up General'. At his side is his loving wife; I recognise her frightened face – it is Ina.

Van Baal is quietly rehabilitated a year later, becoming the Armed Forces' Inspector General. Having long pondered what kind of character it takes to make general, I challenge Van Baal in his new job. I ask him to resolve this affair, which started with orders to steal my supervisor's staff card. And ended with silencing critics of the cover-up of photos, taken by his troops, which prove the impending Srebrenica genocide. In reply, Van Baal evades his responsibility

The Srebrenica genocide and the notorious film roll

During the Bosnian War (1992–95), the United Nations declared the town of Srebrenica a safe area for Bosniaks (Muslims). To a Dutch army battalion fell the role of safeguarding the enclave. Nevertheless, the town was captured by Serb troops. The Dutch offered hardly any resistance.

After the fall of Srebrenica, the Serbs deported all Bosniaks from the enclave and murdered more than eight thousand Muslim men and boys. The Dutch commanders responsible for their protection were Generals Hans Couzy and Ad van Baal. The notorious Srebrenica film roll shows Serb war crimes. This roll of film was suppressed by the Dutch military.

– as he did in Srebrenica. He refers me to the Minister of Defence, to whom I send an advance copy of *The Cover-up General* in March 2014.

My conclusion: suppressing evidence of war crimes harms the international legal order and the rule of law in our country. The Armed Forces approached me back then to write intelligence reports and describe the warring parties involved. In the national interest, I hereby comply with this request – at your service!

In July 2015, the Mothers of Srebrenica put forward the book as one of many supporting testimonies in their billion-euro lawsuit against the Dutch State, to back the contention that our army shares liability for the genocide of their husbands and sons, and has suppressed photos proving this.

A month later, Van Baal claims *The Cover-up General* is partly based on fantasy, without producing any evidence to substantiate his accusation. No proof whatsoever is brought forward either when Barbara sues me for libel. Still, a judge – while admitting not having read it entirely – bans the book. And imposes a speaking ban as well. I am prohibited from speaking any longer on this scandal and, consequently, part of my own life, on pain of a penalty payment of up to 100,000 euros.

Undeterred, I appeal against the censorship judgment. With dozens of supporting documents, I win the case on all counts. The Court of Appeal of The Hague sees no reason to doubt the meticulousness with which the book was written and affirms the book's importance for the public debate on Srebrenica. As extensive publicity is often a safeguard for whistleblowers, I also welcome the fact that this victory for press freedom is being reported worldwide.

In September 2016, *The Cover-up General* is published again – this time with new chapters on my quest for truth and justice. A third, updated edition is issued in April 2022 and an English translation in April 2024.

Note: As a result of legal proceedings, editions from 2016 onwards used the pseudonym 'Monica' for military intelligence officer Barbara Overduyn. Following her death in 2024, her identity is no longer anonymised. The pseudonym 'Jasper' remains in use to protect the author's former partner.

Find out more at thecoverupgeneral.com. The complete book is available free of charge at dedoofpotgeneraal.nl/book.pdf. The struggle for truth and accountability continues.