

Martha Neff Kessler

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Martha Kessler has been an intelligence officer since 1970 when she first entered on duty with the Central Intelligence Agency. Having completed an MA in Middle Eastern studies, she was recruited into the Agency's career training program and launched a career that has continued to the present. She currently consults to the CIA, teaches courses on Islam, and speaks to official and private groups on a variety of subjects concerning the Middle East.

During her career in the Agency, Martha held analytic and management positions in the Directorate of Intelligence, and served as special advisor to the Director of CIA while on the National Intelligence Council. Throughout her career she authored numerous National Intelligence Estimates, headed Agency support to Arab-Israel peace negotiations, and lead CIA intelligence analysis during numerous crises including the civil war in Lebanon, instability in Egypt, the rise of Islamic extremism, and the Gulf wars. She was the CIA's candidate to the National War College where she authored a book on Syria and she was awarded a sabbatical at the Brookings Institution during which she authored several publications on the Middle East.

Following a brief retirement in 2000, Martha was called back to CIA following the September 11 attack, serving another 10 years doing special projects for the Director of CIA on Middle East

stability and US standing in the region, the future of Islamic extremism, the quality of intelligence analysis leading up 9/11, and real time evaluation of US actions in Iraq. Martha served on a team that introduced new analytic techniques to the FBI and CIA. She also consulted to private companies, including Mitre, Centra, and SAIC.

During her government service, Martha was awarded the National Intelligence Community Medal of Outstanding Achievement, the Central Intelligence Agency's Medal of Distinguished Service, and outstanding performance awards for her work during the Lebanon civil war, the Iran-Iraq war, the Persian Gulf war, Middle East peace negotiations, the US invasion of Iraq, and the rise of political Islam. Her career achievements were recognized by her Alma Mater, Denison University, in 2014 when she was honored as an Alumni of Distinction.

Martha served as Ombudsman to the Department of Homeland Security from 2010 to 2015, during which she taught course on analytic integrity and provided private counseling to analysts and managers.

Boards - current and former: Middle East Policy Council; Council member of the Brookings Institution; Peoples Animals Love (PAL;) William Wendt Center (formally Saint Francis Center;)

Passions: Martha is passionate about all things Animal. She is very involved in the animal rescue coalitions and animal human bond Programs.

Over her distinguished career Martha has and continues to mentor young people, providing guidance and counseling to many many individuals.

She loves all sports including Tennis, Golf, swimming and biking.

Martha is married to Dr. Kenneth A Kessler. They have 2 daughters Justine Mackie who is a professor in Creative Writing in New York, and Lauren Kessler who attends the Smith School of Business at the University of Maryland.

The Kessler's reside in Palm Beach Fl.; Rehoboth Beach, Delaware; and Washington DC.