



# The Informant: A True Story

By Kurt Eichenwald

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From an award-winning New York Times investigative reporter comes an outrageous story of greed, corruption, and conspiracy—which left the FBI and Justice Department counting on the cooperation of one man . . .

It was one of the FBI's biggest secrets: a senior executive with America's most politically powerful corporation, Archer Daniels Midland, had become a confidential government witness, secretly recording a vast criminal conspiracy spanning five continents. Mark Whitacre, the promising golden boy of ADM, had put his career and family at risk to wear a wire and deceive his friends and colleagues. Using Whitacre and a small team of agents to tap into the secrets at ADM, the FBI discovered the company's scheme to steal millions of dollars from its own customers.

But as the FBI and federal prosecutors closed in on ADM, using stakeouts, wiretaps, and secret recordings of illegal meetings around the world, they suddenly found that everything was not all that it appeared. At the same time Whitacre was cooperating with the Feds while playing the role of loyal company man, he had his own agenda he kept hidden from everyone around him—his wife, his lawyer, even the FBI agents who had come to trust him with the case they had put their careers on the line for. Whitacre became sucked into his own world of James Bond antics, imperiling the criminal case and creating a web of deceit that left the FBI and prosecutors uncertain where the lies stopped and the truth began.

In this gripping account unfolds one of the most captivating and bizarre tales in the history of the FBI and corporate America. Meticulously researched and richly told by New York Times senior writer Kurt Eichenwald, **The Informant** re-creates the drama of the story, beginning with the secret recordings, stakeouts, and interviews with suspects and witnesses to the power struggles within ADM and its board—including the high-profile chairman Dwayne Andreas, F. Ross Johnson, and Brian Mulroney—to the big-gun Washington lawyers hired by ADM and on up through the ranks of the Justice Department to FBI Director Louis Freeh and Attorney General Janet Reno.

A page-turning real-life thriller that features deadpan FBI agents, crooked executives, idealistic lawyers, and shady witnesses with an addiction to intrigue,

**The Informant** tells an important and compelling story of power and betrayal in America

*From the Trade Paperback edition.*

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## Editorial Review

### Amazon.com Review

*"The FBI was ready to take down America's most politically powerful corporation. But there was one thing they didn't count on."*

So reads the cover of this high-powered true crime story, an accurate teaser to a bizarre financial scandal with more plot twists than a John Grisham novel. In 1992 the FBI stumbled upon Mark Whitacre, a top executive at the Archer Daniels Midland corporation who was willing to act as a government witness to a vast international price-fixing conspiracy. ADM, which advertises itself as "The Supermarket to the World," processes grains and other farm staples into oils, flours, and fibers for products that fill America's shelves, from Jell-O pudding to StarKist tuna. The company's chairman and chief executive, Dwayne Andreas, was so influential that he introduced Ronald Reagan to Mikhail Gorbachev, and it was his maneuvering that ensured that high fructose corn syrup would replace sugar in most foods (ever wondered why Coke and Pepsi don't taste quite like they used to?). There were two mottoes at ADM: "The competitors are our friends, and the customers are our enemies" and "We know when we're lying." And lie they did. With the help of Whitacre, the FBI made hundreds of tapes and videos of ADM executives making price-fixing deals with their corrivals from Japan, Korea, and Canada, all while drinking coffee and laughing about their crimes. The tapes should have cinched the case, but there was one problem: Their star witness was manipulative, deceitful, and unstable. Nothing was as it seemed, and the investigation into one of the most astounding white-collar crime cases in history had only just begun.

Kurt Eichenwald, an investigative reporter, covered the story for *The New York Times* and interviewed more than 100 participants in the case. He methodically records the six-year investigation, leaving no plot twist or tape transcript unexplored. While his primary focus is on deconstructing the disturbed Whitacre and revealing the malleability of truth, the portrait of ADM (and even the Justice Department) is damning enough to make anyone a cynic. --*Lesley Reed*

### Review

"The Informant is epic in scope, a tale of human foibles--of greed, deceit, and arrogance--and also of the search for truth. Eichenwald has told it masterfully, with the narrative drive of a novel. I guarantee it'll keep you reading late into the night."

-- Jonathan Harr, *A Civil Action*

"The Informant is superb reporting in the service of a great story, one with the drama and suspense of a Le Carré novel. Set squarely in the American heartland, delving into the inner sanctum of a global corporation, it explores the shifting boundaries of truth and deception, loyalty and betrayal. It is a remarkable achievement."

-- James B. Stewart, *Den of Thieves and Blind Eye*

"The twists and turns of this nonfiction work leave many thrillers in the dust. Eichenwald's spare prose and journalistic eye for detail make the pages fly."

-- David Baldacci, *Absolute Power and Saving Faith*

"I would say The Informant reads like Grisham, only nobody ever could have invented these characters. A tale this riveting and this strange could only have been built from truth."

-- Sherry Sontag, coauthor, *Blind Man's Bluff*

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