American Sweepstakes
By Kevin Flynn

By 1963 public lotteries - a time-honored if tarnished method of raising revenue for everything from the Roman roads to Washington's Continental Army - had been outlawed in the United States for seventy years. The only legal gambling in America was found in Nevada, where mob involvement had at first been an open secret, and then revealed as no secret at all. In New Hampshire - a conservative, rural state with no sales tax and persistent problems with funding education - state legislator Larry Pickett had filed a bill to establish a lottery in every legislative session since 1953. To the surprise of many, it won passage a decade later and was signed into law by John King, the state's first Democratic governor in forty years.

American Sweepstakes describes how King assembled an unlikely group of supporters - including a celebrated FBI agent and the staunchly conservative publisher of the state's leading newspaper - to establish the first state lottery in the nation, paving the way for what is today a $78 billion enterprise. Despite the remonstrations of the Catholic Church, the threat of arrest by the federal government, the strident denunciations of nearly every newspaper editorialist in the country, and the very real fear that the lottery would be co-opted by the mob, eleven thoroughbred racehorses leapt from the gate on September 12, 1964, in the first New Hampshire Sweepstakes, ushering in the lottery age in America.
In 2013, the United States suffered its worst terrorist bombing since 9/11 at the annual running of the Boston Marathon. When the culprits turned out to be U.S. residents of Chechen descent, Americans were shocked and confused. Why would members of an obscure Russian minority group consider America their enemy? Inferno in Chechnya is the first book to answer this riddle by tracing the roots of the Boston attack to the Caucasus Mountains of southern Russia. Brian Glyn Williams describes the tragic history of the bombers' war-devastated homeland - including tsarist conquest and two bloody wars with post-Soviet Russia that would lead to the rise of Vladimir Putin - showing how the conflict there influenced the rise of Europe's deadliest homegrown terrorist network. He provides a historical account of the Chechens' terror campaign in Russia, documents their growing links to Al Qaeda and radical Islam, and describes the plight of the Chechen diaspora that ultimately sent two Chechens to Boston.

Inferno in Chechnya delivers a fascinating and deeply tragic story that has much to say about the historical and ethnic roots of modern terrorism.

About the Author:
BRIAN GLYN WILLIAMS earned his first master's at the Central Eurasian studies program at Indiana University and a second master's in Russian history and a PhD in Central Asian history from the University of Wisconsin. Among his published works is Afghanistan Declassified: A Guide to America's Longest War (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011). A tenured professor of Islamic history at the University of Massachusetts–Dartmouth, he lives in Boston.