

CIA running black propaganda operation against Iran, Syria and Lebanon, officials say

Some intelligence sources more wary of covert Pentagon operations

By [Larisa Alexandrovna](#)

Global Research, June 07, 2007

[Raw Story](#) 7 June 2007

Theme: [Intelligence](#), [Terrorism](#), [US NATO War Agenda](#)

The Central Intelligence Agency has received approval at least twice in the last several years to conduct an “information war” against several countries in the Middle East, including Iran, Lebanon and Syria, according to current and former intelligence officials. In addition, the Bush Administration has been running operations out of the Defense Department that are not subject to Congressional oversight, intelligence sources say. These programs appear murkier, and have included support for an alleged terrorist group in Iran.

A recent ABC News report revealed that President George W. Bush had signed a presidential finding giving the CIA the authority to conduct “non-lethal” covert operations against Iran. Former and current intelligence sources tell RAW STORY, however, that there have been “at least two” presidential findings over the past few years which have empowered the agency to run an “open-secret” information war against Iranian interests, mainly leveraging resources and assets “within the United States and France.”

Although the resources – people, groups, organizations – were not identified, sources say that they are not terrorist organizations or groups using violent tactics to achieve their goals. “It’s a propaganda operation,” said a former intelligence case officer who wished to remain anonymous due to the sensitive nature of the information. “It is not new or aggressive,” the source added, explaining that the operation has been going on for some time and has Congressional funding and oversight.

CIA spokesman Paul Gimigliano would not comment about the allegations made in the ABC report or discuss the existence of the presidential findings identified to RAW STORY.

“The CIA does not, as a matter of course, publicly discuss allegations of covert action, whether the assertions are wrong, right, or somewhere in-between,” Gimigliano said. “That’s one reason why the term ‘covert action’ still exists.”

“But it’s important to remember that, through the Congress, there is vigorous oversight of secret intelligence activities,” he added.

According to current and former intelligence officials, the various presidential findings are not limited to Iran. Several countries within the Middle East – including Syria and Lebanon – as well as groups such as Hezbollah, are being targeted through what sources call “black propaganda” efforts.

Iran is being targeted by the CIA’s activities with a “pro-democracy” message, sources say,

and the agency is supporting overt “pro-democracy” groups.

The program’s particulars are highly classified. Intelligence sources stress, however, that the groups being used are rather mainstream and the operations are almost entirely restricted to information warfare.

Sources would not identify what mechanism was being employed to distribute the propaganda, if it included news media, individuals or organizations, or whether that information was seeping back into domestic news reports.

One former intelligence case officer did explain that the CIA’s program is operating largely outside of the Middle East and is aimed at identifying potential allies, as well as using already existing well known groups through whom information can be delivered. The type of “information” and the “groups” and “organizations” involved were not identified.

ABC News may have reported the presidential finding as “new” because of the recently passed massive intelligence budget. Under [the bill](#), roughly \$50 million was appropriated for the “Democracy Fund” and the “Broadcasting Board of Governors,” both earmarked for Iran operations.

Sources close to the Select Senate Committee on Intelligence would not discuss any aspect of the CIA program or comment on anything relating to the presidential findings.

“This is an area I simply cannot get into,” said one source.

Pentagon operation supporting terrorist group kept from Congress

RAW STORY has also learned that the Pentagon is continuing to conduct more aggressive “black” operations, approved by the National Security Council and the Office of the Vice President.

Current and former intelligence officials would not identify new specific covert programs running out of the Pentagon, though sources stressed these are far riskier and more truly covert operational activities against Iran than the activities of the CIA.

These operations started almost immediately after the Iraq war and have continued for several years. Because they can be considered part of a military operation, they are not subjects to the same requirements for Congressional authorization as the activities of the CIA.

The majority of these efforts to destabilize Iran through a covert war of aggression have been carried out by the Department of Defense, largely steered by the Office of the Vice President and by then-Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld.

A series of RAW STORY reports has identified some of the “off book” or black operations running out of the Pentagon over the last several years. In 2003, the Defense Department began working with terrorist and dissident groups in an effort to destabilize Iran, bypassing traditional intelligence channels. One of the assets the Pentagon used was a terrorist organization known as Mujahedeen-e Khalq (MEK), which was being “run” in two southern regional areas of Iran, including a Shia region where a series of attacks in 2006 left many dead and hundreds injured.

These activities have often been guided by the same individuals whose actions during Iran-Contra were the reason for a 1991 law on covert activities which for the first time clearly defined covert activities and how their oversight should be handled.

During Iran-Contra, the Reagan White House – via the National Security Council – sold weapons to Iran, an avowed enemy of the United States, and used the money to fund various terrorist and dissident groups, collectively called the Contras, to fight a proxy war against the government of Nicaragua.

Sources say that MEK has been used for intelligence collection, an activity which has traditionally fallen under the CIA. The administration also appears to be looking the other way as groups such as MEK commit acts of violence.

Intelligence sources interviewed for this article all expressed concern over the lack of attention to the Pentagon's covert activities. Some believe illegal activities like those of the Iran-Contra days are now being hidden under the loophole of "traditional military activities" to avoid Congressional oversight.

Steven Aftergood, director for the Federation of American Scientists Project on Government Secrecy, says this loophole exists in Congressional oversight with regards to military covert activities.

"CIA covert actions have to be authorized by a written presidential finding, which must be provided to Congress," Aftergood said. "By contrast, DOD operations, including clandestine or covert operations, are not subject to this procedure.

"As a result," he added, "there may be a temptation to opt for a purely military action to take advantage of the loophole in congressional notification requirements."

Covert economic warfare may not be limited to CIA

Another former intelligence official said that the CIA has been cleared to target Iran's economic interests, but that the approval is limited to non-aggressive activities. The CIA "has been empowered to put economic pressure on Iran," the former intelligence officer stated, but would not elaborate on what the meaning of "pressure" is.

Yet some suggest that the economic element of the covert program is either far more aggressive or is being attributed to the CIA when in fact another agency may be running it.

Foreign intelligence sources say that economic pressure is aimed at Iran's oil-rich economy, with US efforts serving to "persuade" financial institutions, oil companies, and international investment interests to pull out of Iran and even drop already existing energy projects.

These sources cite the example of an unnamed company that is being denied financing for energy projects inside Iran by international banks, indicating that many more such examples exist.

Other possible forms of pressure would include less subtle activities, such as intercepting supply convoys and confiscating equipment. Foreign sources are not sure if this covert activity is in fact part of the CIA program.

The Department of Defense did not respond to comment on this story.

Muriel Kane contributed to the research for this article.

Larisa Alexandrovna is the Managing Editor of Investigative News for Raw Story and regularly covers intelligence and national security. She can be reached at larisa@rawstory.com.

The original source of this article is [Raw Story](#)
Copyright © [Larisa Alexandrovna](#), [Raw Story](#), 2007

[Comment on Global Research Articles on our Facebook page](#)

[Become a Member of Global Research](#)

Articles by: [Larisa Alexandrovna](#)

Disclaimer: The contents of this article are of sole responsibility of the author(s). The Centre for Research on Globalization will not be responsible for any inaccurate or incorrect statement in this article. The Centre of Research on Globalization grants permission to cross-post Global Research articles on community internet sites as long the source and copyright are acknowledged together with a hyperlink to the original Global Research article. For publication of Global Research articles in print or other forms including commercial internet sites, contact: publications@globalresearch.ca
www.globalresearch.ca contains copyrighted material the use of which has not always been specifically authorized by the copyright owner. We are making such material available to our readers under the provisions of "fair use" in an effort to advance a better understanding of political, economic and social issues. The material on this site is distributed without profit to those who have expressed a prior interest in receiving it for research and educational purposes. If you wish to use copyrighted material for purposes other than "fair use" you must request permission from the copyright owner.

For media inquiries: publications@globalresearch.ca