

Obama's Expanded Military Spying and Torture Network

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Global Research, July 05, 2010

[Antifascist Calling...](#) 4 July 2010

Region: [USA](#)

Theme: [Crimes against Humanity](#),
[Intelligence](#)

Despite promises to the contrary, the Obama administration has consolidated, even expanded privacy- and civil liberties killing programs launched by the Bush government.

From warrantless spying and driftnet surveillance to the indefinite detention and torture of foreign suspects held in U.S. gulags, and from the murderous drone wars in Pakistan to threats to assassinate American citizens merely on the suspicion they might be terrorists, 18 months into Obama's new "change" order, facts on the ground paint a grim picture indeed.

As egregious as these central facts are in demolishing the veracity of the President's long-forgotten campaign pledges, when it comes to enlisting the services of defense and security corporations for waging America's bogus "War On Terror 2.0.1," the current regime delivers!

Spawned in Darkness, Nurtured by Corruption: the Counterintelligence Field Activity

Nearly two years ago, [Antifascist Calling](#) reported that the Pentagon shuttered its controversial spy shop, the Counterintelligence Field Activity (CIFA), the military office launched in early 2002 in a now infamous [Directive](#) from former Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz and top aide, Undersecretary of Defense for Intelligence, Stephen A. Cambone.

Remember CIFA? Under Cambone's watch, the outsourced "activity" (some 70% of the office's employees were contractors) was caught in flagrante delicto spying on antiwar activists, people who attended peace rallies outside military bases, and dispatched agents provocateurs into groups opposed to military recruitment, including the Quakers.

Before being run to ground after journalists exposed the shady operation, CIFA had compiled a massive database on activists and other suspect heimat citizens considered threats to the military. The Threat and Local Observation Notice database, TALON/CORNERSTONE, became a Pentagon repository for alarmist tittle-tattle and misinformation generated by the office's army of corporate spies.

What was this Rumsfeldian satrapy doing with our hard-earned tax dollars, lovingly doled out to their security partners? Why subverting our rights, of course! TALON/CORNERSTONE reports subsequently published by [The National Security Archive](#) are a chilling read and reveal a systematic pattern of profiteering and lawbreaking by both the Pentagon and some of the biggest firms servicing the secret state.

One CIFA-supported project, [NBC Nightly News](#) reported in 2005, was run by security giant [Northrop Grumman](#). Designated "Person Search," the initiative included capabilities to

search government and commercial databases and was intended to “provide comprehensive information about people of interest.” Another program, stood up by [Computer Sciences Corporation](#) (a firm now heavily-leveraged in the emerging “[cybersecurity](#)” niche market) developed “systems able to detect, mitigate and investigate insider threats,” as well as to “identify and document normal and abnormal activities and ‘behaviors’.”

By late 2005, TALON/CORNERSTONE had evolved into a joint military intelligence and civilian law enforcement system for sharing information held in Pentagon databases on “persons of interest” deemed “national security threats.” Project VOYAGER and the related Joint Protection Enterprise Network were TALON subprojects deployed by military counterspies to “enhance” coordination with local, state and federal law enforcement agencies.

As investigative journalist Tim Shorrock revealed in his essential book, [Spies For Hire](#), amongst the upstanding corporate citizens pulling down hundreds of millions of taxpayer dollars were: the scandal-plagued [MZM, Inc.](#), convicted fraudster Mitchell Wade’s firm that bribed disgraced congressman, Randy “Duke” Cunningham (R-CA) with antiques, cash, a yacht and hookers in return for “earmarks” crafted by Wade, and Cunningham associate, Brent Wilkes, the former CEO of [ADCS, Inc.](#) For their labors, Cunningham and Wilkes earned eight year sentences in federal prison, while Wade was rewarded with twelve years in the slammer and a big “thanks” for “keeping us safe.”

While MZM garnered the lion’s share of publicity in the wake of the Cunningham scandal, other, bigger players in the CIFA debacle escaped media scrutiny, including: [Lockheed Martin](#) (America’s No. 1 defense corp.) for “CI operations and CI/Antiterrorism investigative support.” [U.S. Investigations Services](#), a former subsidiary of the secretive Carlyle Group for “technology protection and force protection missions.” Analex Inc., a subsidiary of the British security firm [QinetiQ](#). After being kicked to the curb when Rumsfeld was booted from the Pentagon, Cambone became an executive vice president at QinetiQ and quickly “secured” a \$30 million, five year contract to provide “a range of unspecified ‘security services’” to CIFA, according to [CorpWatch](#). [ManTech International](#) for the firm’s work monitoring and searching intelligence and law enforcement databases and providing “line analysis, data extraction and other analytical methods ... for senior DoD and other agency officials.” [Harris Corp.](#), a Florida based contractor that provided IT and professional engineering services to CIFA to “support the protection of critical research assets and technologies” for DoD. And last but certainly not least, [SRA International Inc.](#), provided counterterrorism and counterintelligence “analytical solutions” for CIFA and now, for the Defense Intelligence Agency.

But that’s all in the past, the tainted legacy of the discredited Bush/Cheney era, right? Wrong!

Next-Gen Counterspies with a new Mission: Torture

The CIFA brand may have been fatally wounded but its shameful bequest lives on. DIA securocrats [claimed](#) that their new spy shop, the Defense Counterintelligence and Human Intelligence Center (DCHC) would “combine CIFA resources and responsibilities with longstanding DIA CI and HUMINT capabilities.” DCHC director, Army Maj. Gen. Theodore Nicholas said that “the realignment of CIFA’s functions and resources into DIA strengthens

the close historical and operational relationship between counterintelligence and HUMINT.”

[The Washington Post](#) reported at the time, that DCHC would carry out “strategic offensive counterintelligence operations,” but that the enterprise would not target American citizens according to a spokesperson for Undersecretary of Defense for Intelligence, James R. Clapper, Jr., Obama’s nominee for Director of National Intelligence.

The DoD stressed that “CIFA’s designation as a law enforcement activity did not transfer to DIA. The new center will have no law enforcement function.” In other words, DCHC supposedly will not spy on Americans. But unlike it’s classified budget, talk is cheap and the devil is in the details. In the intervening years since the center’s stand-up, a few hard facts have penetrated the penumbral shroud spread like giant bat wings over the Pentagon, and what we’ve learned is that it’s business as usual.

Last month, [The Washington Post](#) reported that the DIA “wants to open a new repository for information about individuals and groups in what appears to be a successor to a controversial counterintelligence program that was disbanded in 2008.”

According to SpyTalk blogger Jeff Stein, the “new Foreign Intelligence and Counterintelligence Operation Records section will be housed in DIA’s Defense Counterintelligence and Human Intelligence Center, or DCHC.” Surprise! Stein disclosed that “its records database ... seems to be headed to the new unit.”

A June 15 notice posted on [The Federal Register](#) informs us that DCHC’s Foreign Intelligence and Counterintelligence Operation Records will house information on “individuals involved in, or of interest to, DoD intelligence, counterintelligence, counterterrorism and counternarcotic operations or analytical projects as well as individuals involved in foreign intelligence and/or training activities.”

Accordingly, “categories of records may include identifying information such as name, Social Security Number (SSN), address, citizenship documentation, biometric data, passport number, vehicle identification number and vehicle/vessel license data.” In other words, under our current “change” regime, the Pentagon’s new secretive office will continue to amass personal data on Americans, especially those engaged in legal political activities such as protesting and organizing against the Empire’s illegal wars and occupations.

The purpose of such spying is to “document intelligence, counterintelligence, counterterrorism and counternarcotic operations relating to the protection of national security, DoD personnel, facilities and equipment, to include information systems,” and this information may be disclosed outside DoD to “Federal, State, local, and tribal agencies for the purpose of law enforcement, counterterrorism, counterintelligence, counter narcotic activities and homeland security as authorized by U.S. Law or Executive Order, or for the purpose of protecting the territory, people and interests of the United States of America against breaches of security related to DoD controlled information or facilities and against terrorist activities.”

With enough airspace to fly several squadrons of F-35s through with little in the way of either congressional oversight or privacy protections, FBI whistleblower and current policy counsel for the American Civil Liberties Union, Mike German, told Stein that “it’s a little hard to tell what this is exactly, but we do know that DIA took over ‘offensive counterintelligence’ for the DoD once CIFA was abandoned ... it therefore makes sense that this new DIA data

base would be collecting the same types of information that CIFA collected improperly, so Americans should be just as concerned.”

German told the Post that DoD has also started collecting so-called Suspicious Activity Reports or SARs “which they share with federal, state and local law enforcement through the FBI eGuardian system.” Which is another way of saying, armed with new Pentagon authorization, both TALON and Project VOYAGER have been folded into the Bureau’s already extensive domestic surveillance operations.

[Federal Computer Week](#) reported in May that “Defense Secretary Robert Gates has ordered the Defense Department to use the FBI’s eGuardian suspicious activity reporting system to record and track law-enforcement information about potential threats against the military or military installations.”

What type of information would enter the Pentagon’s black box data management system was not specified, however, “data will be entered into eGuardian only by authorized personnel trained in the federal guidelines and FBI procedures protecting civil liberties, Gates said, and data will be reviewed to ensure that information based solely on ethnicity, race or religion is not entered into the system.”

One can only assume, given the fact that some 30% of DIA personnel and 70% of DCHC’s operatives are contractors, that SARs will be handled by many of the same shady corporate outfits that “assisted” CIFA during the Bush years. Indeed, [CorpWatch](#) has reported that DIA’s principal contractors currently include BAE Systems North America, Booz Allen Hamilton, Computer Sciences Corporation, Lockheed Martin, Northrop Grumman, and Titan Corporation, now a subsidiary of L-3 Communications, firms that designed and ran CIFA’s illegal programs.

While DIA spokesman Donald Black told [Newsweek](#) that “the new database would not include the highly controversial aspects of TALON,” two anonymous “U.S. officials” told reporter Mark Hosenball “that while CIFA had been disbanded on paper, many of its personnel and some of its functions were transferred to DCHC. One of the officials said that DCHC is now in the same office space that CIFA once occupied, in a complex near suburban Washington’s Reagan National Airport.”

But wait, there’s more!

Keeping America’s “warfighters” safe from unruly mobs of antiwar “anarchists” and Quakers aren’t the only disreputable activities which the Pentagon’s new spy shop are busily engaged. While we’re at it, let’s add torture to the mix!

[The Atlantic’s](#) Marc Ambinder disclosed in May that the DIA “runs a classified interrogation facility for high-value detainees inside Bagram Air Field in Afghanistan, defense and administration officials said, and prisoners there are sometimes subject to tougher interrogation methods than those used elsewhere.”

While the Bagram “black jail” torture facility was previously thought to be run by members of the Pentagon’s secretive Joint Special Operations Command (JSOC), Ambinder reports “it is manned by intelligence operatives and interrogators who work for the DIA’s Defense Counterintelligence and Human Intelligence Center (DCHC). They perform interrogations for a sub-unit of Task Force 714, an elite counter-terrorism brigade.”

Although personnel at the facility are mandated to follow interrogation guidelines listed in the Army Field Manual, The Atlantic revealed that “under secret authorization, the DIA interrogators use methods detailed in an appendix to the Field Manual, [Appendix M](#), which spells out ‘restricted’ interrogation techniques.”

In other words, the same repulsive CIA-perfected techniques first developed by MKULTRA and Project ARTICHOKE and summarized in the Agency’s torture manual, [KUBARK Counterintelligence Interrogation](#), including isolation, sleep deprivation and the use of mind-altering drugs are currently being employed today as Obama wages his “right war.”

While Ambinder employs the same euphemisms and weasel-words as his colleagues over at The New York Times, The Wall Street Journal and The Washington Post in describing Obama regime torture programs, psychoanalyst and war critic Stephen Soldz is far less circumspect. “For those who think that President Obama banned torture centers like this [Bagram’s “black prison”], think again.” Writing on the [Psyche, Science, and Society](#) blog, Soldz avers that “Obama’s Executive Order only banned CIA secret prisons. This administration thus intended from the beginning to maintain its torture facility, only under a Defense Department label. Obama apparently was thinking ahead.”

A fierce critic of the American Psychological Association’s (APA) tainted record of collaborating with imperialist torture programs, Soldz writes that “over the years” APA “has devoted considerable lobbying resources to maintaining Congressional funding for CIFA. Now that CIFA has been folded into DCHC in the Defense Intelligence Agency, the APA is lobbying Congress for money for ‘behavioral science’ to support the DIA’s military intelligence activities.”

Apparently such lobbying efforts have paid off rather handsomely.

As psychologist Jeffrey Kaye and investigative journalist H.P. Albarelli revealed in a recent piece at [Truthout](#), the mind-control legacy of the CIA’s Project ARTICHOKE is alive and well at Bagram’s “black prison.” Kaye and Albarelli write that “interest in the use of drugs and mind control techniques in military research and operations persists to the present day. A November 2006 instruction from the Secretary of the Navy (3900.39D) informs that the Undersecretary for the Navy would heretofore be the ‘Approval Authority for research involving: (a) Severe or unusual intrusions, either physical or psychological, on human subjects (such as consciousness-altering drugs or mind-control techniques)’.”

“Techniques” that most certainly have been employed at Bagram Air Base under DCHC’s baleful watch. Legal scholar and [Harper’s Magazine](#) columnist, Scott Horton adds that a top APA “research scientist,” Susan Brandon, “who worked in the Bush Administration’s White House Office of Social and Behavioral Sciences ... had dealings with interrogation policy. She now works for the Defense Intelligence Agency’s (DIA), Defense Counterintelligence and Human Intelligence Center (DCHC).”

As America’s imperial wars and occupations bog down and the bodies pile up, as unemployment and home foreclosures sky rocket, and as the Gulf of Mexico is transformed into a vast aquatic dead zone courtesy of BP and their friends in Washington, is it intemperate of me to ask Obama fans: “How’s that hopey-changey thing working out for ya?”

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