

GOP DOMESTIC SPYING AND "TREPIDATION"

Amidst the hoopla about threats to America yesterday, a Walter Pincus story about a different kind of threat to America kind of fell through the cracks. Pincus reported that the top two officials of the Counterintelligence Field Activity, CIFA, abruptly announced their resignation (effective the end of the month). Justin Rood at TPM managed to get a copy of the resignation email, which basically described how two guys decided to resign at precisely the same time.

For the past four years, I have been privileged to serve as your Director and be part of the CIFA family. It has been an honor to serve in that capacity. I am especially proud of all of you and what you have accomplished for the CI Community, for the overall CI mission, and for your co-workers here at CIFA.

Today, I want to share with you my decision to resign as Director and retire from government service. My last day in the office will be August 31. **I did not make this decision without trepidation**, but the time is right to move on to the next phase of my career.

Mr. Hefferon has also decided to retire, after over 31 years of federal service. [my emphasis]

So were Burtt and Hefferon ousted, or are they getting out ~~before the Democrats get subpoena power before the Cunningham scandal exposes some new abuse on privacy~~ while the getting is good?

CIFA's Directorates

Before you answer that question, it's probably worth reviewing the story of CIFA more closely. First, here's a description of CIFA's

activities, from an earlier Pincus story.

Its Directorate of Field Activities (DX) “assists in preserving the most critical defense assets, disrupting adversaries and helping control the intelligence domain,” the fact sheet said. Those roles can range from running roving patrols around military bases and facilities to surveillance of potentially threatening people or organizations inside the United States. The DX also provides “on-site, real time . . . support in hostile areas worldwide to protect both U.S. and host nation personnel from a variety of threats,” the fact sheet said.

[snip]

Another CIFA directorate, the Counterintelligence and Law Enforcement Center, “identifies and assesses threats” to Defense personnel, operations and infrastructure from “insider threats, foreign intelligence services, terrorists, and other clandestine or covert entities,” according to the Pentagon.

CIFA manages the Pentagon database that includes Talon reports, consisting of raw, unverified information picked up by the military services on suspicious activities that could involve terrorist threats. The Pentagon acknowledged last week that the Talon database contained reports on peaceful civilian protests and demonstrations that should have been purged long ago under Defense Department regulations.

A third CIFA directorate, Behavioral Sciences, “has 20 psychologists and a multimillion-dollar budget,” and supports both “offensive and defensive counterintelligence efforts,” according to a government biography of its

director, S. Scott Shumate. Shumate was the chief operational psychologist for the CIA's counterterrorism center until 2003. His group has also provided a "team of renowned forensic psychologists [who] are engaged in risk assessments of the Guantanamo Bay detainees," according to his biography.

CIFA's Chronology

And here are some relevant dates of which Pincus reminds us in yesterday's article and elsewhere:

- September 2002, then Deputy Secretary of Defense for Counter-Intelligence Burt (the guy who resigned yesterday) establishes CIFA to oversee counterintelligence units of the armed services; consulting on the new agency was James King, recently retired director of National Imagery and Mapping Agency and MZM vice president
- Late 2002, Cunningham got Mitchell Wade a data storage contract worth \$6 million, of which \$5.4 was profit
- January 2004, Cunningham added \$16.5 million to defense authorization for a "collaboration center" that appears to include business for Wade's company
- December 2005, Pincus reveals a CIFA database contains raw intelligence

data on peace activists
(and, presumably, Jesus'
General)

- March 2006, prosecutors in the Cunningham case announce they're reviewing CIFA contracts to MZM
- March 2006, Stephen Cambone announces an investigation of CIFA's contracting—the investigation is (like the investigation into Dougie Feith) “ongoing”
- May 2006, Porter Goss resigns under allegations of ties to the Wilkes/Wade bribery ring
- May 2006, House Intelligence Committee (Peter Hoekstra's Committee) first moves to exercise oversight on CIFA
- August 2006, CIFA director and deputy director resign

The GOP Scheme

Now I've been pointing out for months what all this seems to suggest.

Back when Nixon was spying on his enemies, he used the agencies of the US government. He was using civil servants subject to congressional oversight to do his dirty work. But the newfangled Republican party learned in Iran-Contra that, if you outsource the dirty work far enough, you're more likely to avoid the oversight that will lead to discovery.

[snip]

So let me connect the dots here. Republican legislators have set up this nifty scheme, whereby their buddies ply them with golf trips, swank real estate deals, and prostitutes. In exchange for that booty, they give their buddies contracts at Defense or Homeland Security or CIA. Spying contracts. Under those spying contracts, the buddies spy on American citizens, even funny bloggers and peaceniks. And although it is known that these buddies are a little sloppy with the way they spy on American citizens, they continue to get more work.

The core of the Cunningham scandal is a scheme whereby a big GOP donor and Bush pioneer helps the Pentagon set up a domestic spy agency. The apparently willful inaction of the committee that **should** exercise oversight over the agency (and remember, Goss headed the Committee when MZM got the big CIFA contracts) permits CIFA to expand greatly, awarding contracts with huge profit margins and staffing an agency with 70% contractors. And, it turns out, this domestic spy agency is spying on people—Quakers and liberal satiric bloggers—whom the GOP would consider their enemies.

They get to spy on us **and** make a huge profit.

The Gig Is Up?

All of this may shed some light on another of yesterday's forgotten stories, about the Dems on the House Intelligence Committee pushing to release the results of an investigation into their committee's role in the Cunningham scandal.

An internal congressional investigation has found that "major breakdowns" in legislative controls enabled former Republican Rep. Randy "Duke" Cunningham to use his position on the House Intelligence Committee to steer

classified government contracts to political cronies, according to a memo distributed this week to Democrats on the panel.

The memo accuses Republicans of backing out of an agreement to subpoena Cunningham, and calls for the public release of a 20-page unclassified report documenting the findings of the investigation.

[snip]

But the internal House probe has found a similar pattern of abuses in contracts involving U.S. intelligence agencies – and includes language describing cases in which the disgraced congressman pressured committee aides to set aside secret funds for his associates, according to congressional sources familiar with the investigation.

The committee's report, which has not been released publicly, "provides important details about how the committee's processes were abused to accomplish Cunningham's illicit aims," Harman wrote in the memo, a copy of which was obtained by the Los Angeles Times.

The panel's report also "highlights some major breakdowns in the ability of our committee to prevent the damage even after numerous 'red flags' were raised."

[snip]

Republicans and Democrats are divided over how much of the investigation's findings should be released. Senior aides say Stern has completed a classified report that is nearly 50 pages long, as well as a 20-page unclassified version.

In her memo, Harman said Democrats

should push to have the full unclassified text released to the public.

"There is no reason that our committee should be able to 'bury' any unclassified facts about our committee's business, however unpleasant or embarrassing," Harman said.

It remains to be seen whether Harman's pressure will be successful. I'm not holding my breath. But I would bet that, if the report is released, it will reveal that both Peter Hoekstra and Porter Goss allowed Cunningham's schemes to succeed.

I don't know why Director Burtt and Deputy Director Hefferon decided to retire suddenly. Were they pushed? Or can they simply read the tea-leaves?

Suffice it to say, the Republicans will probably add Jane Harman to the list of those Congressional Representatives whom GOP voters should fear ascending as Committee Chairs.