

THE RENT-A-GENERALS ATTEMPT TO HEAD SKELTON OFF AT THE PASS

At least that's what I surmise from this news:

The Defense Department has temporarily stopped feeding information to retired military officers pending a review of the issue, said Robert Hastings, principal deputy assistant secretary of Defense for public affairs.

The New York Times first reported on Sunday that the Defense Department was giving information to retired officers serving as pundits for various media organizations in order to garner favorable media coverage.

Some of these retired officers saw their access to key decision-makers as possible business opportunities for the defense contractors they represent, according to the newspaper. The story also alleged that the officers who did not repeat the Bush administration's official line were denied further access to information.

Hastings said he is concerned about allegations that the Defense Department's relationship with the retired military analysts was improper.

"Following the allegations, the story that is printed in the New York Times, I directed my staff to halt, to suspend the activities that may be ongoing with retired military analysts to give me time to review the situation," Hastings said in an interview with Stripes on Friday.

Hastings said he did not discuss the

matter with Defense Secretary Robert Gates prior to making his decision. He could not say Friday how long this review might take.

"We'll take the time to do it right," he said.

As I noted yesterday, Ike Skelton sure sounded like he was going to return to the Rent-A-General program.

Skelton spoke of "discussing these matters in the day ahead." If Skelton (and hopefully Levin with him) treat this threat to the credibility of the military seriously, we might actually get people to begin to report on the Influence Industry in Washington.

Let's hope Hastings' little pre-emptive strike doesn't dissuade Skelton.