

U.S. Intelligence Crisis Poses a Threat to the World (Part 1)

Privatized and politicized intelligence is undermining the mission of providing unbiased information to both high-level decision makers and the American public, explains George Eliason in this first of a three-part series. ([Part two of this series is available here.](#) [Part three is here.](#))

By George Eliason

Back in 1991, during the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the general consensus of the intelligence community was that America needed a strong Russia. Russians bore the weight of dismantling the Soviet Union and an internally strong and stable Russia was considered the biggest stable democratic government in the hemisphere.

A strong Russia provides stability throughout the region, it was understood. Without a strong and stable Russia, the massive Russian Federation would descend into small nationalist countries. Warring nations and instability would be the norm and not the exception.

For its part, Russia also needs an internally and externally strong America, as does the world. A weak America that is susceptible to overthrow would be the largest threat that nobody wants to talk about. Such a strong America requires professional and competent intelligence services.

On the other hand, if U.S. intelligence is questionable and untrustworthy, there is no single greater threat to the planet today. Members of an intelligence community who try to circumvent the democratic process should be prosecuted no matter who they are or who they are trying to undermine.

This three-part article series is a top-down look at the deep state. Its purpose isn't to identify every company and every player. Instead, this lead-in is a primer showing the layout of the land at the highest levels and why things have gone so very wrong inside the intelligence community.

The second part will show how the top level relates to the next level down with contractors and companies that deal with public issues, public policy, and commit illegal actions. You'll see what it looks like when people that have taken the mantle of national security use the tools for their own profit, politics, and prejudices.

Rather than an intellectual exercise, this will show concrete examples of people

guiding and pushing fake agendas today. You'll see clearly the damage they are doing to American citizens that have never been questioned or warned that these things could possibly happen to them in a democratic society.

The third part will explicitly show how this threat translates into the real world to unsuspecting people because they didn't agree with someone they don't even know exists. This is the reality when the destruction of your life, reputation, wealth, employment, and relationships become a payable item on someone else's invoice. The sad fact is your innocence means as much to them as the pleas for mercy from the last "bad guy" they shot in a video game. For them, it's only a game. You are a troll, not a human being.

The intelligence community lost the ability to police itself during the Iraq War under George W. Bush's tenure as president. While there remains a majority of intelligence professionals dedicated to public service, the nature of their work keeps them from even being able to talk about the corporate vultures that have taken over the industry and turned it into a for-profit venture that has little to do with national security.

The Spy Who Billed Me

In 2005, Dr. R.J. Hillhouse described this problem with the U.S. intelligence community as it was still developing. Her first [Mother Jones](#) article "[The Spy Who Billed Me](#)" began a short-lived, unfinished debate on the dangers of using contractors for intelligence work.

Because of how undeveloped the U.S. national security apparatus was going into the digital age, after 9/11 the U.S. government tried to shorten the learning curve by hiring contractors in droves to make up the gap in actionable intelligence. This meant, says John Pike of GlobalSecurity.org, that America's spy network would soon resemble NASA's mission control room in Houston.

"Most people, when they see that room, think they're looking at a bunch of NASA people," Pike notes. "But it's 90 percent contractors."

Hillhouse argues that the contracting trend will leave intelligence unchecked and effective oversight less likely. By 2007, Hillhouse demonstrated that corporations, companies, and industry personalities were now starting to illegally oversee their own intelligence services and other companies instead of the agencies that are tasked with governing and controlling them.

For all practical purposes, effective control of the NSA is with private corporations, which run its support and management functions. As the Washington Post's Walter Pincus reported last year, more than 70 percent of the staff of the Pentagon's newest intelligence unit, Counterintelligence Field Activity, is

made up of corporate contractors.

Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) lawyers revealed at a conference in May that contractors make up 51 percent of the staff in DIA offices. At the CIA, the situation is similar. Between 50 and 60 percent of the workforce of the CIA's most important directorate, the National Clandestine Service (NCS), responsible for the gathering of human intelligence, is composed of employees of for-profit corporations.

While the numbers themselves are shocking, remember, these are 2007 numbers. At the same time, agencies according to the law are supposed to physically keep oversight over the companies and contractors. All intelligence was supposed to be filtered and a neutral report written by the agency before it was put into the presidential daily briefing (PDB). This briefing is singly the most important document produced because of its potential impact on the world.

From the PDB, the president of the United States decides:

- Who is the enemy?
- Who is friendly (or are there really any friends out there)?
- Who is a danger and how?
- Why are they a danger?
- What is their motivation?
- What steps will the US need to take to stop them, turn them in a different direction, or make peace with them?

Privatized Intelligence

Hillhouse describes that being in the intelligence community during the Cold War was like being in an extended family. Everyone was doing the work because of a commitment to public service. People counted on each other and looked after each other.

By 2007 this was no longer the case. The critical departments of the agencies themselves were extra-legally almost fully privatized. It's not a stretch to say that for some of the most secret and sensitive work in intelligence was staffed by what amounts to day hires.

She describes the change in the intelligence community as cataclysmic because it went from that strong tight-knit family setting to resembling groups of problem kids in foster homes because everybody was temporary and there was no commitment, job security, or real oversight.

In an earlier article detailing the rise and dangers of private contractors accessing Vault 7 tools, it becomes clear that to be a star in the new

intelligence community, the only qualification is knowing how to network. And it helps if you hate the right people. One of the biggest stars of intelligence over the last decade is a former gift shop cashier that had no intelligence experience or training.

In that article, I asked Professor Michael Jasinsky Assistant Professor Department of Political Science University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh about this. Jasinski had oversight over researchers that were later hired by U.S. intelligence agencies and provided evaluations of them prior to their employment.

His comments show why a radical cleanup in both intelligence and counter-terrorism is necessary. Their patriotic feelings were real, he said, but they had a distorted view of the intelligence community. Despite Hollywood depictions, which are influenced by CIA "outreach," the reality is little like what you might see in Mission Impossible or the Bond films, Jasinsky explained.

"If you ever had personal contact with the 'three-letter agencies' for any period of time, you'd think different," he said. "My most recent experience with the intelligence community was at MIIS, post-9/11 when the agencies were coming there to hire, and they were hiring big. They hired many of my research assistants ... and in the process, they'd ask me, their immediate supervisor, for my opinion. So I'd tell them point-blank: can't read, can't write, can't analyze. I don't care what their CV says, the only language they can function in at any level is English."

Yet, they would get hired anyway, Jasinsky told me. "Scary political views they wore on their sleeve? No matter, they'd get hired anyway. All of my good assistants went to work for the UN, IAEA, major NGOs. The dregs went to intelligence," he said.

Jasinsky told me that when he sees the "Russian interference" stories and hears about the intelligence community's inability to safeguard, or use responsibly, its own cyber-warfare arsenal, he isn't surprised. "There are no shortcuts in this kind of work," he said. "If you rapidly expand at the cost of dramatically lowering standards, you (and the country) are going to pay a price. We're paying it right now."

Contract Renewals

Because their jobs depend on contracts being won or lost, there was no longer a commitment to public service. People take real intelligence from one company to another, to another, and so on. Hillhouse noted that out of work spies do what spies do best: they spy and sell secrets.

“More than 70 percent of the Pentagon’s Counterintelligence Field Activity (CIFA) unit is staffed by contractors, known as ‘green badgers,’ who also represent the majority of personnel in the DIA, the CIA’s National Clandestine Service, and the National Counterterrorism Center,” according to an article by Simon Chesterman in *The European Journal of International Law*. At the CIA’s station in Islamabad contractors reportedly outnumber government employees three to one, Chesterman points out.

Private companies have been utilized to carry out torture and the misuse of sensitive information collected by intelligence agencies, and yet almost every intelligence and most field roles are being turned over to private companies that get contracts because of “new” problems – crises, influence operations, hacking, danger, threats, or dossiers their companies or related companies happen to find.

Confronted by arbitrary staffing ceilings and uncertain funding, components are left with no choice but to use contractors for work that may be borderline ‘inherently governmental’ – only to find that to do that work, those same contractors recruit our own employees, already cleared and trained at government expense, and then ‘lease’ them back at considerably greater expense.

Indeed, if you look at the LinkedIn profiles for either intelligence community corporation principals or any of the department heads and other leadership positions in government agencies, the revolving door pattern is there.

Chesterman’s paper identifies work given to corporations or individuals that should remain a strictly governmental function is now in the hands of companies that do it for hire. For-profit companies are behind most of what the intelligence the agency heads and the president see. For-profit, companies look after their own bottom line, often producing biased information in the hopes of getting repeat business.

Also, because they are committed to their companies and not public service, the lines have been blurred to the point that some of these contractors no longer distinguish between the work they do for U.S. intelligence and security and what they can do legally in the civilian world. There is no difference and they have no problem plying the same tools and techniques on an unsuspecting public.

Shadow Intelligence

In a 2007 Washington Post editorial titled “The Value of ‘Private Spies,” which was meant to answer Hillhouse’s accusations of corruption and mismanagement, the DNI tried to deflect it by giving a much lower percentage of contractors than it was using.

But the ODNI did concede that there is some danger of using private companies for intelligence and direct action work. "Our workforce has recovered to the point that we can begin to shed some contract personnel or shift them away from core mission areas, and the CIA is leading the way in this," the ODNI stated.

So that was 11 years ago. Did the ODNI make good on taking control back from private companies that profit on national security problems? Nope. How are things shaping up in the intelligence community today?

In a 2015 article at The Nation titled "How Private Contractors Have Created a Shadow NSA," Tim Shorrock describes what he calls "the cyberintelligence ruling class."

"Over the last 15 years, thousands of former high-ranking intelligence officials and operatives have left their government posts and taken up senior positions at military contractors, consultancies, law firms, and private-equity firms. In their new jobs, they replicate what they did in government—often for the same agencies they left. But this time, their mission is strictly for-profit," Shorrock wrote.

Many of the principal figures come from America's wealthiest families. Although the wealthiest have always had a lead in filling policy and cabinet positions, this time the public service aspect is missing.

Shorrock goes on to detail how the same 1% Americans claim to be fighting is the cyberintelligence elite that controls the media. Mathew Olsen is an example as the former National Counterterrorism Center director and current IronNet Corp. president. He joined ABC as a commentator. He goes further and shows how this is the rule and not the exception.

This is going on all across media channels. Every network has their own cyberintelligence "expert" to explain complicated topics, but their conflicts of interest almost always remain hidden.

The other point Shorrock noted was that their storylines are almost always their companies' position. They are why the networks don't deviate often from the official version of things because they provide the official version to the U.S. government.

Same Narrative

If it looks like U.S. intelligence and the media networks are all working from the exact same narrative, it's because they are. By using narrative builders the intelligence elite avoids information fratricide. This happens when there are opposing views to a given situation which neutralize the point you want to push.

Information fratricide is defined as actions, perceptions, and information from friendly forces that create improper impressions can adversely affect intelligence operations. This means everyone in media has to follow the same narrative. Stopping information fratricide was why the PropOrNot blacklist was rolled out, and is why certain sectors are very aggressive in shutting down or discrediting independent media outlets.

In fact, this is a well-worn process, going back decades. As the late Robert Parry has explained, the media agenda is enforced through a tactic called “controversializing,” which is a process of being marginalized, attacked and “subjected to systematic smears and professional deconstruction.”

As a result, they have undermined a free and unrestricted press and essentially destroyed the Fourth Estate.

When people can't get the facts to judge governmental actions, the government can do no wrong because there are no freedoms, rights, or protections left for the people. People engaged in real criminal activity can do no wrong and there is no accountability possible.

When I started researching this three years ago, I was focused on the bottom of this intelligence-media pyramid. In the two follow-up articles, the way the very top of the pyramid interacts with the boots on the ground practitioners in the new American reality will be examined.

George Eliason is an American journalist who lives and works in the Donbass region of Ukraine.

Part two of this series is available here. Part three is here.
