

(b)(6)

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From: Whitman, Bryan Mr OSD PA
Sent: Sunday, August 30, 2009 5:53 PM
To: (b)(6) Capt JCS SJS OCJCS PA
Subject: Re: Stars and Stripes update: Pentagon cancels reporter profiling program

He told me yesterday,

From: (b)(6) Capt JCS SJS OCJCS PA
To: Whitman, Bryan Mr OSD PA
Sent: Sun Aug 30 17:25:11 2009
Subject: Fw: Stars and Stripes update: Pentagon cancels reporter profiling program

Classification: UNCLASSIFIED

You know he was going to cancel it?

From: Starr, Barbara <Barbara.Starr@turner.com>
To: (b)(6) Capt JCS SJS OCJCS PA
Sent: Sun Aug 30 17:03:05 2009
Subject: Fw: Stars and Stripes update: Pentagon cancels reporter profiling program

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Barbara Starr
CNN Pentagon Correspondent
Sent from my BlackBerry Wireless Handheld

From: Witt, Howard (b)(6)
Sent: Sun Aug 30 16:47:10 2009
Subject: Stars and Stripes update: Pentagon cancels reporter profiling program

Less than a week after Stars and Stripes first revealed that the Pentagon was routinely profiling journalists, the Army decided Sunday to cancel the program....

<http://www.stripes.com/article.asp?section=104&article=64481>

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Sunday, August 30, 2009

Military terminates Rendon contract

By Kevin Baron <<mailto:baronk@stripes.osd.mil>> , Stars and Stripes
Mideast edition, Monday, August 31, 2009

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ARLINGTON, Va. — The U.S. military is canceling its contract with a controversial private firm that was producing background profiles of journalists seeking to cover the war that graded their past work as “positive,” “negative” or “neutral,” Stars and Stripes has learned.

“The Bagram Regional Contracting Center intends to execute a termination of the Media Analyst contract,” belonging to The Rendon Group, said Col. Wayne Shanks, chief of public affairs for International Security Assistance Forces–Afghanistan.

The announcement follows a week of revelations by Stars and Stripes in which military public affairs officers who served in Afghanistan said that as recently as 2008 they had used reporter profiles compiled by The Rendon Group, a private public relations firm in Washington, D.C., to decide whether to grant permission to embed with troops on the battlefield.

“The decision to terminate the Rendon contract was mine and mine alone. As the senior U.S. communicator in Afghanistan, it was clear that the issue of Rendon’s support to US forces in Afghanistan had become a distraction from our main mission,” said Rear Adm. Gregory J. Smith, in an e-mail sent Sunday to Stars and Stripes.

"I have been here since early June and at no time has anyone who worked for me ever conducted themselves in a manner as your newspaper alleged. I cannot and will not speculate on the past, although I have found no systemic issues with fairness or equity in the way U.S. forces have run their media embed program."

Compiling reporters' past body of work is common practice to help the military's public affairs officers prepare for incoming journalists, Pentagon spokesman Bryan Whitman said last week.

On Thursday, Whitman said Rendon would continue to produce the profiles and they would include "characterizations" as positive-to-negative, but scoffed at their value and said the Pentagon used no such outside analysis.

"This was a decision made by US forces Afghanistan. I would refer you to them for their reasons," Whitman wrote in an e-mail to Stars and Stripes on Sunday.

In at least two of the profiles, copies of which were obtained by Stars and Stripes, Rendon clearly stated the purpose of the analysis was to help military public affairs officers determine what kind of coverage to expect from the journalist, whether to grant their embed request, and if that journalist could be steered toward "positive" coverage for the military.

On Friday, a public affairs officer with the 101st Airborne Division said that when his unit was in Afghanistan and in charge of the Rendon contract, he had used the conclusions contained in Rendon profiles in part to reject at least two journalists' applications for embeds.

Maj. Patrick Seiber, a 101st Airborne spokesman, said both cases were based on issues of accuracy or ground rules forbidding the publication of classified information. But his comments contradicted the Pentagon's assertion that no media analysis of a journalists' past works of any kind was being used to reject embed requests.

The one-year \$1.5 million contract was for a range of media analysis services beyond just the profiles and was just the latest contract for services it had provided the military for years. The company has a long history of contracting with the Defense Department and the CIA on controversial media projects.

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