

State-Sponsored Terror: British and American Black Ops in Iraq

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In January of 2002, the Washington Post ran a story detailing a CIA plan put forward to President Bush shortly after 9/11 by CIA Director George Tenet titled, "Worldwide Attack Matrix," which was "outlining a clandestine anti-terror campaign in 80 countries around the world. What he was ready to propose represented a striking and risky departure for U.S. policy and would give the CIA the broadest and most lethal authority in its history." The plan entailed CIA and Special Forces "covert operations across the globe," and at "the heart of the proposal was a recommendation that the president give the CIA what Tenet labeled "exceptional authorities" to attack and destroy al Qaeda in Afghanistan and the rest of the world." Tenet cited the need for such authority "to allow the agency to operate without restraint -- and he wanted encouragement from the president to take risks." Among the many authorities recommended was the use of "deadly force."

Further, "Another proposal was that the CIA increase liaison work with key foreign intelligence services," as "Using such intelligence services as surrogates could triple or quadruple the CIA's effectiveness." The Worldwide Attack Matrix "described covert operations in 80 countries that were either underway or that he was now recommending. The actions ranged from routine propaganda to lethal covert action in preparation for military attacks," as well as "In some countries, CIA teams would break into facilities to obtain information." [1]

P2OG: "Commit terror, to incite terror... in order to react to terror"

In 2002, the Pentagon's Defense Science Board (DSB) conducted a "Summer Study on Special Operations and Joint Forces in Support of Countering Terrorism," portions of which were leaked to the Federation of American Scientists. According to the document, the "War on Terror" constitutes a "committed, resourceful and globally dispersed adversary with strategic reach," which will require the US to engage in a "long, at times violent, and borderless war." As the Asia Times described it, this document lays out a blueprint for the US to "fight fire with fire." Many of the "proposals appear to push the military into territory that traditionally has been the domain of the CIA, raising questions about whether such missions would be subject to the same legal restraints imposed on CIA activities." According to the Chairman of the DSB, "The CIA executes the plans but they use Department of Defense assets."

Specifically, the plan "recommends the creation of a super-Intelligence Support Activity, an organization it dubs the Proactive, Preemptive Operations Group (P2OG), to bring together CIA and military covert action, information warfare, intelligence and cover and deception. For example, the Pentagon and CIA would work together to increase human intelligence (HUMINT) forward/operational presence and to deploy new clandestine technical capabilities." The purpose of P2OG would be in "'stimulating reactions' among terrorists and states possessing weapons of mass destruction, meaning it would prod terrorist cells into action, thus exposing them to 'quick-response' attacks by US forces." [2] In other words, commit terror to incite terror, in order to react to terror.

The Los Angeles Times reported in 2002 that, "The Defense Department is building up an elite

secret army with resources stretching across the full spectrum of covert capabilities. New organizations are being created. The missions of existing units are being revised," and quoted then-Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld as saying, "Prevention and preemption are ... the only defense against terrorism." [3] Chris Floyd bluntly described P2OG in CounterPunch, saying, "the United States government is planning to use "cover and deception" and secret military operations to provoke murderous terrorist attacks on innocent people. Let's say it again: Donald Rumsfeld, Dick Cheney, George W. Bush and the other members of the unelected regime in Washington plan to deliberately foment the murder of innocent people--your family, your friends, your lovers, you--in order to further their geopolitical ambitions." [4]

"The Troubles" with Iraq

On February 5, 2007, the Telegraph reported that, "Deep inside the heart of the "Green Zone" [in Iraq], the heavily fortified administrative compound in Baghdad, lies one of the most carefully guarded secrets of the war in Iraq. It is a cell from a small and anonymous British Army unit that goes by the deliberately meaningless name of the Joint Support Group (JSG)." The members of the JSG "are trained to turn hardened terrorists into coalition spies using methods developed on the mean streets of Ulster during the Troubles, when the Army managed to infiltrate the IRA at almost every level. Since war broke out in Iraq in 2003, they have been responsible for running dozens of Iraqi double agents." They have been "[w]orking alongside the Special Air Service [SAS] and the American Delta Force as part of the Baghdad-based counter-terrorist unit known as Task Force Black."

It was reported that, "During the Troubles [in Northern Ireland], the JSG operated under the cover name of the Force Research Unit (FRU), which between the early 1980s and the late 1990s managed to penetrate the very heart of the IRA. By targeting and then "turning" members of the paramilitary organisation with a variety of "inducements" ranging from blackmail to bribes, the FRU operators developed agents at virtually every command level within the IRA." Further, "The unit was renamed following the Stevens Inquiry into allegations of collusion between the security forces and protestant paramilitary groups, and, until relatively recently continued to work exclusively in Northern Ireland." [5]

Considering that this group had been renamed after revelations of collusion with terrorists, perhaps it is important to take a look at what exactly this "collusion" consisted of. The Stevens Inquiry's report "contains devastating confirmation that intelligence officers of the British police and the military actively helped Protestant guerillas to identify and kill Catholic activists in Northern Ireland during the 1980s." It was, "a state policy sanctioned at the highest level." The Inquiry, "highlighted collusion, the willful failure to keep records, the absence of accountability, the withholding of intelligence, and the extreme of agents being involved in murder," and acknowledged "that innocent people had died because of the collusion." These particular "charges relate to activities of a British Army intelligence outfit known as the Force Research Unit (FRU) and former Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) police officers." [6]

In 2002, the Sunday Herald reported on the allegations made by a former British intelligence agent, Kevin Fulton, who stated that, "he was told by his military handlers that his collusion with paramilitaries was sanctioned by Margaret Thatcher herself." Fulton worked for the Force Research Unit (FRU), and had infiltrated the IRA, always while on the pay roll of the military. Fulton tells of how in 1992, he told his FRU and MI5 intelligence handlers that his IRA superior was planning to launch a mortar attack on the police, yet his handlers did nothing and the attack went forward, killing a policewoman. Fulton stated, "I broke the law seven days a week and my handlers knew that. They knew that I was making bombs and giving them to other members of the IRA and they did

nothing about it. If everything I touched turned to shit then I would have been dead. The idea was that the only way to beat the enemy was to penetrate the enemy and be the enemy."[7]

In 1998, Northern Ireland experienced its "worst single terrorist atrocity," as described by the BBC, in which a car bomb went off, killing 29 people and injuring 300.[8] According to a Sunday Herald piece in 2001, "Security forces didn't intercept the Real IRA's Omagh bombing team because one of the terrorists was a British double-agent whose cover would have been blown as an informer if the operation was uncovered." Kevin Fulton had even "phoned a warning to his RUC handlers 48 hours before the Omagh bombing that the Real IRA was planning an attack and gave details of one of the bombing team and his car registration." Further, "The man thought to be the agent is a senior member of the [IRA] organization." [9]

In 2002, it was revealed that, "one of the most feared men inside the Provisional IRA," John Joe Magee, head of the IRA's "internal security unit," commonly known as the IRA's "torturer- in-chief," was actually "one of the UK's most elite soldiers," who "was trained as a member of Britain's special forces." The Sunday Herald stated that, "Magee led the IRA's internal security unit for more than a decade up to the mid-90s - most of those he investigated were usually executed," and that, "Magee's unit was tasked to hunt down, interrogate and execute suspected British agents within the IRA." [10]

In 2006, the Guardian reported that, "two British agents were central to the bombings of three army border installations in 1990." The claims included tactics known as the 'human bomb', which "involved forcing civilians to drive vehicles laden with explosives into army checkpoints." This tactic "was the brainchild of British intelligence." [11]

In 2006, it was also revealed that, "A former British Army mole in the IRA has claimed that MI5 arranged a weapons-buying trip to America in which he obtained detonators, later used by terrorists to murder soldiers and police officers," and "British intelligence co-operated with the FBI to ensure his trip to New York in the 1990s went ahead without incident so that his cover would not be blown." Further, "the technology he obtained has been used in Northern Ireland and copied by terrorists in Iraq in roadside bombs that have killed British troops." [12]

Considering all these revelations of British collusion with IRA terrorists and complicity in terrorist acts in Northern Ireland through the FRU, what evidence is there that these same tactics are not being deployed in Iraq under the renamed Joint Support Group (JSG)? The recruits to the JSG in Iraq are trained extensively and those "who eventually pass the course can expect to be posted to Baghdad, Basra and Afghanistan." [13]

P2OG in Action

In September of 2003, months after the initial invasion of Iraq in March 2003, Iraq's most sacred Shiite mosque was blown up, killing between 80 and 120 people, including a popular Shiite cleric, and the event was blamed by Iraqis on the American forces. [14]

On April 20, 2004, American journalist in Iraq, Dahr Jamail, reported in the New Standard that, "The word on the street in Baghdad is that the cessation of suicide car bombings is proof that the CIA was behind them." Jamail interviewed a doctor who stated that, "The U.S. induces aggression. If you don't attack me, I will never attack you. The U.S. is stimulating the aggression of the Iraqi people!" This description goes very much in line with the aims outlined in the Pentagon's P2OG document about "inciting terror," or "preempting terror attacks." [15]

Weeks after the initial incident involving the British SAS soldiers in Basra, in October of 2005, it was

reported that Americans were "captured in the act of setting off a car bomb in Baghdad," as, "A number of Iraqis apprehended two Americans disguised in Arab dress as they tried to blow up a booby-trapped car in the middle of a residential area in western Baghdad on Tuesday. ... Residents of western Baghdad's al-Ghazaliyah district [said] the people had apprehended the Americans as they left their Caprice car near a residential neighborhood in al-Ghazaliyah on Tuesday afternoon. Local people found they looked suspicious so they detained the men before they could get away. That was when they discovered that they were Americans and called the ... police." However, "the Iraq police arrived at approximately the same time as allied military forces - and the two men were removed from Iraq custody and whisked away before any questioning could take place." [16]

It was reported that in May of 2005, an Iraqi man was arrested after witnessing a car bombing that took place in front of his home, as it was said he shot an Iraqi National Guardsman. However, "People from the area claim that the man was taken away not because he shot anyone, but because he knew too much about the bomb. Rumor has it that he saw an American patrol passing through the area and pausing at the bomb site minutes before the explosion. Soon after they drove away, the bomb went off and chaos ensued. He ran out of his house screaming to the neighbors and bystanders that the Americans had either planted the bomb or seen the bomb and done nothing about it. He was promptly taken away."

Further, another story was reported in the same month that took place in Baghdad when an Iraqi driver had his license and car confiscated at a checkpoint, after which he was instructed "to report to an American military camp near Baghdad airport for interrogation and in order to retrieve his license." After being questioned for a short while, he was told to drive his car to an Iraqi police station, where his license had been forwarded, and that he should go quickly. "The driver did leave in a hurry, but was soon alarmed with a feeling that his car was driving as if carrying a heavy load, and he also became suspicious of a low flying helicopter that kept hovering overhead, as if trailing him. He stopped the car and inspected it carefully. He found nearly 100 kilograms of explosives hidden in the back seat and along the two back doors. The only feasible explanation for this incident is that the car was indeed booby trapped by the Americans and intended for the al-Khadimiya Shiite district of Baghdad. The helicopter was monitoring his movement and witnessing the anticipated 'hideous attack by foreign elements.'" [17]

On October 4, 2005, it was reported by the Sydney Morning Herald that, "The FBI's counterterrorism unit has launched a broad investigation of US-based theft rings after discovering some vehicles used in deadly car bombings in Iraq, including attacks that killed US troops and Iraqi civilians, were probably stolen in the United States, according to senior US Government officials." Further, "The inquiry began after coalition troops raided a Falluja bomb factory last November and found a Texas-registered four-wheel-drive being prepared for a bombing mission. Investigators said there were several other cases where vehicles evidently stolen in the US wound up in Syria or other Middle Eastern countries and ultimately in the hands of Iraqi insurgent groups, including al-Qaeda in Iraq." [18]

In 2006, the Al-Askariya mosque in the city of Samarra was bombed and destroyed. It was built in 944, was over 1,000 years old, and was one of the most important Shi'ite mosques in the world. The great golden dome that covered it, which was built in 1904, was destroyed in the 2006 bombing, which was set off by men dressed as Iraqi Special Forces. [19] Former 27-year CIA analyst who gave several presidents their daily CIA briefings, Ray McGovern, stated that he "does not rule out Western involvement in this week's Askariya mosque bombing." He was quoted as saying, "The main question is Qui Bono? Who benefits from this kind of thing? You don't have to be very conspiratorial or even paranoid to suggest that there are a whole bunch of likely suspects out there and not only the Sunnis. You know, the British officers were arrested, dressed up in Arab garb, riding around in a

car, so this stuff goes on." [20]

Death Squads for "Freedom"

In January of 2005, Newsweek reported on a Pentagon program termed the "Salvador Option" being discussed to be deployed in Iraq. This strategy "dates back to a still-secret strategy in the Reagan administration's battle against the leftist guerrilla insurgency in El Salvador in the early 1980s. Then, faced with a losing war against Salvadoran rebels, the U.S. government funded or supported "nationalist" forces that allegedly included so-called death squads directed to hunt down and kill rebel leaders and sympathizers." Updating the strategy to Iraq, "one Pentagon proposal would send Special Forces teams to advise, support and possibly train Iraqi squads, most likely hand-picked Kurdish Peshmerga fighters and Shiite militiamen, to target Sunni insurgents and their sympathizers, even across the border into Syria, according to military insiders familiar with the discussions." [21]

The Times reported that, "the Pentagon is considering forming hit squads of Kurdish and Shia fighters to target leaders of the Iraqi insurgency in a strategic shift borrowed from the American struggle against left-wing guerrillas in Central America 20 years ago. Under the so-called 'El Salvador option', Iraqi and American forces would be sent to kill or kidnap insurgency leaders." It further stated, "Hit squads would be controversial and would probably be kept secret," as "The experience of the so-called "death squads" in Central America remains raw for many even now and helped to sully the image of the United States in the region." Further, "John Negroponte, the US Ambassador in Baghdad, had a front-row seat at the time as Ambassador to Honduras from 1981-85." [22]

By June of 2005, mass executions were taking place in Iraq in the six months since January, and, "What is particularly striking is that many of those killings have taken place since the Police Commandos became operationally active and often correspond with areas where they have been deployed." [23]

In May of 2007, an Iraqi who formerly collaborated with US forces in Iraq for two and a half years stated that, "I was a soldier in the Iraqi army in the war of 1991 and during the withdrawal from Kuwait I decided to seek asylum in Saudi Arabia along with dozens of others like me. That was how began the process whereby I was recruited into the American forces, for there were US military committees that chose a number of Iraqis who were willing to volunteer to join them and be transported to America. I was one of those." He spoke out about how after the 2003 invasion, he was returned to Iraq to "carry out specific tasks assigned him by the US agencies." Among those tasks, he was put "in charge of a group of a unit that carried out assassinations in the streets of Baghdad."

He was quoted as saying, "Our task was to carry out assassinations of individuals. The US occupation army would supply us with their names, pictures, and maps of their daily movements to and from their place of residence and we were supposed to kill the Shi'i, for example, in the al-A'zamiyah, and kill the Sunni in the of 'Madinat as-Sadr', and so on." Further, "Anyone in the unit who made a mistake was killed. Three members of my team were killed by US occupation forces after they failed to assassinate Sunni political figures in Baghdad." He revealed that this "dirty jobs" unit of Iraqis, Americans and other foreigners, "doesn't only carry out assassinations, but some of them specialize in planting bombs and car bombs in neighborhoods and markets."

He elaborated in saying that "operations of planting car bombs and blowing up explosives in markets are carried out in various ways, the best-known and most famous among the US troops is placing a bomb inside cars as they are being searched at checkpoints. Another way is to put bombs in the cars

during interrogations. After the desired person is summoned to one of the US bases, a bomb is placed in his car and he is asked to drive to a police station or a market for some purpose and there his car blows up." [24]

Divide and Conquer?

Craig Murray, former British Ambassador to Uzbekistan, wrote in October of 2006, that, "The evidence that the US directly contributed to the creation of the current civil war in Iraq by its own secretive security strategy is compelling. Historically of course this is nothing new - divide and rule is a strategy for colonial powers that has stood the test of time. Indeed, it was used in the previous British occupation of Iraq around 85 years ago. However, maybe in the current scenario the US just over did it a bit, creating an unstoppable momentum that, while stalling the insurgency, has actually led to new problems of control and sustainability for Washington and London." [25]

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