

Stratfor: Blood On Their Hands

by Khadija Sharife via sal - The Africa Report *Sunday, Mar 11 2012, 8:21am*

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Even if we were to place epistemological and ethical questions aside, certain Stratfor's analysts are turning out to be rather twisted creatures. While some turn party tricks for intelligence, except in AIDS-infested Africa, others, such as Fred Burton - a counter-terrorism and security expert, alleged to frequently service US intelligence, are a tad aggressive. One of Fred's gems include: "The owner is a peacenik. He needs his head dunked in a full toilet bowl at Gitmo." So much for niceties.



But beyond the flippant remarks (and who isn't facetious from time to time?) there exists a more dangerous reality: Stratfor - as evidenced by their own content - is neither a politically nor ideologically neutral intelligence agency.

They have clearly picked a side.

When analyst Lauren Goodrich had lunch with former Federal Judge Sam Kent, found guilty of consensual sexual misconduct and perjury, she tried to convince him that Halliburton - a company he ruled a major case against - was not responsible for his suffering. "Isn't it strange that the Justice Department begins sniffing around for dirt to throw at me just weeks after I ruled a heavy case against Halliburton. Then a small set of affairs turn into an untrue situation and then spun up into an unprecedented case against a Federal Judge," asked Kent.

"Of course, I told him he was nuts to rule anything against Halliburton. I also told him that this sounds like a John Grisham plotline," responded Goodrich. Allegedly, Halliburton - like Lockheed Martin and others, is a client.

Similarly, Stratfor's internal narrative reveals that organizations such as International Rivers (one email promoting Nnimmo Bassey's new mega-dam video was listed) are monitored. There is nothing wrong with this.

It is their intent that matters.

Clients from Coca-Cola and Dow Chemicals frequently dole out cash, around \$8000 per average report, to investigate civil society 'opponents' from PETA to comedy spoof crew, the Yes Men. And the latter is one example of why and where Stratfor gets really dirty: the company was paid to spy on

activists protesting the gas leak from Union Carbide's Bhopal pesticide plant (1984), considered one of the world's worst industrial catastrophes, causing mass environmental damage, killing over 15 000 people and injuring 500 000 others.

It is no wonder that the world is in a state of hell

In one fundamental sense, there is no such thing as objectivity. Humans are essentially subjective beings, and even if one were to consciously engage an issue from a perceived neutral stance, the habitus of personal development (absorbed, learned, or acquired) extending from ideological collective myths to class aesthetics, comes to the fore of man's identity.

And vulgarity is cultivated, through tribalism, nationalism, ethnicity, religion and culture, rather than weeded out. Modern civilisation, rooted in amoral scientificity, tells us that ethical behaviour is relative and not a 'factual' reality. Capitalism tells us that man operates from the premise of self-interest.

But history - and our own innate nature - tells us otherwise.

Wars may be the delusional and dangerous creatures of politicians but most humans join these bloody battlefields, going to certain death or worse - an injured life - driven by the urge to defend and protect; to fight the good fight. They may not understand the reality of it, but in their own minds, they are doing the right thing. And never are such men more inspired than when their leaders lead from the front. What men like South Africa's heroic Mandela have showed us, is that humans are willing to put life, aside, for what they believe to be a just cause, especially when led by a seemingly just leader.

This is why Hollywood movies, with their fairy-tale endings, are so successful: never do we, as individual or collective audiences, honor or respect a human being more than when he rises above the worst, to become his best.

So, when indifference to the destruction of what is irreplaceable, for something as common as money constitutes the core foundation of intelligence agencies - the microcosms of the forces that drive foreign policy - and this indifference, as Balzac noted in *Lost Illusions*, deadens the world, it is no wonder that the world is in a state of hell.

With their emails, Stratfor appears to advocate for a world where polluters and murderers, circumvent accountability by obtaining information to pre-empt - and in the process destroy - their opposition. And this is the rule, rather than the exception, for any agency gathering intelligence for the highest bidder.

In this sense, it is a company with blood on their hands.

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