

Secret order prepares new US wars in Middle East and Central Asia

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A front-page article in Tuesday's *New York Times* reveals the existence of a secret directive signed by Gen. David Petraeus, chief of the US Central Command, ordering the expansion of covert military operations throughout the Middle East, Central Asia and the Horn of Africa. The seven-page document, entitled "Joint Unconventional Warfare Task Force Execute Order," essentially provides the US military with a blank check to carry out aggressive acts against virtually any country.

Issued in September 2009, the order calls for the creation of a network of covert task forces and intelligence-gathering units which will "penetrate, disrupt, defeat or destroy" any target within any country designated by the US military. These forces will carry out clandestine operations which "cannot or will not be accomplished" through other military means.

Once inside the targeted country, US forces will also "prepare the environment" for full-scale military assaults. In addition to military personnel, the *Times* reports, Petraeus's order enlists "foreign businesspeople, academics or others" in "persistent situational awareness" efforts—in other words, in spying.

The US will target countries considered hostile as well as countries with which it has maintained friendly relations. Among the countries cited by the *Times* as potential targets are Iran, Saudi Arabia and Somalia. The *Times* also reports that the document "appears to authorize specific operations in Iran, most likely to gather intelligence about the country's nuclear program or identify dissident groups that might be useful for a future military offensive."

While the Obama administration publicly indicates it will counter the supposed nuclear threat from Iran by

calling for greater UN sanctions and trade embargoes, the Petraeus order clearly suggests that Obama has something far more sinister in mind. The *Times* cites US officials who say the order "also permits reconnaissance that could pave the way for possible military strikes in Iran if tensions over its nuclear ambitions escalate."

The secret order is already believed to have laid the groundwork for the US military's offensive in Yemen, which began in December 2009. US Special Forces troops entered that country to provide its military with training and join with them in attacking Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, said to be the Al Qaeda affiliate in Yemen. President Obama ordered air strikes on alleged militant compounds in December that claimed the lives of dozens of civilians. US Naval ships have also sent missiles raining down on the country.

The *Times* acknowledges that it agreed to withhold information contained in the Petraeus document, a copy of which the newspaper says it viewed. Citing "concerns about troop safety raised by an official at United States Central Command," the newspaper reports that it agreed to suppress details on troop deployments.

Thus the liberal "paper of record" does its part to further the aggressive designs of the US military and keep the American people in the dark about the most vital details of the covert operations.

While the *Times* does not say so, the covert operations order, which goes beyond similar directives under the Bush administration, could not have been issued without the approval of President Obama. This underscores the fact that the Obama administration is continuing and expanding the policies of militarism and war carried out under Bush, and preparing to extend US military aggression well beyond the confines of Iraq

and Afghanistan.

The use of military special operations forces as intelligence operatives throughout the Middle East and Central Asia allows the administration to place spy operations under the jurisdiction of the US Central Command and General Petraeus. In contrast to the activities of the Central Intelligence Agency, the military's covert spy operations will not by law require presidential approval or be subject to congressional oversight.



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