

# US military's Defense Clandestine Service to deploy hundreds of international spies

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The recently formed Defense Clandestine Service (DCS), the elite in-house spying operation of the US Department of Defense (DOD), is training a large force of new military-intelligence agents to conduct covert operations around the world, according to officials cited by the *Washington Post*. The service, which operates under the DOD's Defense Intelligence Agency, is specifically targeting China, Iran, and targets across the Middle East and Africa.

In what top officials have called the “spy surge,” the DCS will focus on “national intelligence” problems, such as the growing strength of the Chinese military and the spread of Islamist militias in Africa and the Middle East, according to statements from top officials.

Formed in 2012 to spearhead an expansion of the US military-intelligence operations, the Defense Clandestine Service consolidated several of the DIA's military-intelligence elements, including the Defense Human Intelligence and Counterterrorism Center, the Counterintelligence Field Activity, the Strategic Support Branch, and the Defense Attache System. This has created an internal intelligence network within the US military so powerful that some officials have described it as a second CIA.

Although the military originally sought to train more than 1,000 new DCS intelligence officers, officials cited by the *Washington Post* last week said the real figure may be closer to 500 agents. Even still, the lowered figure may be deceptive given that it excludes many officers currently involved in training or occupying administrative positions, a US official told the *Post*.

The emergence of the DCS exemplifies a “broader convergence trend” that is blurring traditional distinctions between civilian intelligence agencies charged with spying and other covert operations, and

the military, which focused on waging war. Since 9/11, the CIA has taken on far more direct paramilitary operations, including the drone assassination program, which has led to bitter jurisdictional tensions with the military. Such conflicts may be one motivation for the DOD spying initiative.

In any case, new DCS agents will train alongside CIA candidates at “the Farm,” the agency's secretive training facility, where DCS candidates already compose some 20 percent of trainees. Once they graduate, the newly minted DCS spies will work closely with members of the CIA's National Clandestine Service and the military's Joint Special Operations Command (JSOC).

The launch of the DCS aimed to transform the entire DIA “into a spy service focused on emerging threats and more closely aligned with the CIA and the elite military commando units,” according to the *Post*. JSOC planned to create some 200 new posts to enable DCS agents to work alongside US Special Forces in North Africa and other regions, JSOC head William McRaven told the *Post*.

“One of the most striking features of the post-9/11 era has been the convergence of military and intelligence operations. Nothing illustrates the trend better than the CIA's emergence as a veritable combatant command in the conflict with Al Qaeda, though it manifests as well through the expansion of clandestine special forces activities, joint CIA-special forces operations, and cyber activities that defy conventional categorization,” noted Robert Chesney of the University of Texas in an article on “Military-Intelligence Convergence.”

In comments at a 2012 conference on intelligence, then-DIA director Lt. General Michael Flynn explained his vision for the DCS to serve as a sort of militarist vanguard capable of unifying and further empowering

some of the most powerful agencies of the capitalist state.

“I’m going to use this [the DCS] to integrate the entire agency [the DIA]. This is not a marginal adjustment for DIA. This is a major adjustment for national security,” Flynn said at the time.

“Today and tomorrow DIA is clearly postured to achieve even greater heights due to the establishment of our fully integrated intelligence centers, enhancements to all-source analysis and building the Defense Clandestine Service,” Flynn said.

The DIA was founded in 1958 and rapidly developed from the 1960s onward, as the US ruling elite sought to develop new organizational forms to strengthen and consolidate control over its military-intelligence agencies in response to the wave of anti-colonial struggles in Asia, Latin America and Africa.

Formed by the Defense Reorganization Act of 1958, the DIA quickly oversaw the launch of the National Intelligence University (NIU), an elite intelligence school founded by the DOD in 1962 that serves as a seeding bed for positions in the leadership cadre of US government agencies.

“Its [the NIU] mission was to enhance the preparation of selected military officers and key DoD civilian personnel for important command, staff and policy-making positions in the national and international security structure; prepare DoD military and civilian personnel for duty in the military attaché system; and assist the broad career development of Department of Defense military and civilian personnel assigned to intelligence functions,” the NIU official web page states.

The DIA has since blossomed into a global intelligence apparatus employing some 17,000 agents, more than 50 percent who are deployed overseas at any given time. The agency allocates \$4.4 billion per year in its role as manager of the General Defense Intelligence Budget, according to documents leaked by Edward Snowden in 2013.

The agency has experienced a steady expansion of its power since the September 11 attacks. Media reports indicate that the DIA received expanded authority to conduct domestic intelligence operations as part of a 2008 DOD internal reorganization that gave rise to the Defense Counterintelligence and Human Intelligence Center, and that the DIA received authorizations from

the Bush administration to conduct domestic spying in 2005.

Coming as it does amid the Obama administration’s confrontational “pivot to Asia,” the US military’s deployment of hundreds of new CIA-trained intelligence agents—overseen by an agency widely understood to be targeting the Chinese military—represents another stride in the direction of world war.



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