

US Defense Department organizing covert operations against "the general public"

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The US Defense Department (DOD) is developing domestic espionage and covert operations targeting "the general public" in coordination with the intelligence establishment and police agencies, according to a *New York Times* report.

"The Times analysis showed that the military and its investigative agencies have almost as many undercover agents working inside the United States as does the F.B.I.," the newspaper wrote.

"While most of them are involved in internal policing of service members and defense contractors, a growing number are focused, in part, on the general public as part of joint federal task forces that combine military, intelligence and law enforcement specialists," the *Times* continued.

The report amounts to an acknowledgment by the leading media organ of the US ruling class that the American government is deploying a vast, forward-deployed counter-insurgency machine to target the US population at large.

Coming directly from the horse's mouth, the *Times* report makes clear that espionage, deception, and covert operations are now primary instruments of the US government's domestic policy. In preparation for a massive upsurge in the class struggle, the US ruling class is mobilizing the entire federal bureaucracy to carry out systematic and targeted political repression against the working class in the US and around the world.

These moves are in keeping with the latest US Army "Operating Concept" strategy document, published in October, which calls for "Army forces to extend efforts beyond the physical battleground to other contested spaces such as public perception, political subversion, and criminality."

In addition to the DOD, at least 39 other federal security and civilian agencies, including the Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA), the Department of Homeland Security

(DHS), the Department of Education and the Internal Revenue Service (IRS), have developed increasingly ambitious forms of covert operations involving the use of undercover agents, which now inhabit "virtually every corner of the federal government," according to unnamed government officials and documents cited by the *New York Times*.

New training programs to prepare agents to conduct Internet-based undercover sting operations have been developed by the DOD, Homeland Security (DHS) and the FBI, according to the report.

DHS alone spends at least \$100 million per year on the development of undercover operations, an unnamed DHS intelligence official told the *Times*. Total costs for operations involving undercover government agents likely total at least several hundred millions of dollars per year, the *Times* reported.

The US Supreme Court trains its own security force in "undercover tactics," which officers use to infiltrate and spy on demonstrators outside the high court's facilities, the *Times* reported.

IRS agents frequently pose as professionals, including as medical doctors, in order to gain access to privileged information, according to a former agent cited by the report. IRS internal regulations cited in the report state that "an undercover employee or cooperating private individual may pose as an attorney, physician, clergyman or member of the news media."

Teams of undercover agents deployed by the IRS operate in the US and internationally in a variety of guises, including as drug money launderers and expensive luxury goods buyers.

The Department of Agriculture (DOA) employs at least 100 of its own covert agents, who often pretend to be food stamp users while investigating "suspicious vendors and fraud," according to the *Times*.

Covert agents employed by the Department of

Education (DOE) have embedded themselves in federally funded education programs, unnamed sources cited by the report say.

Numerous other federal bureaucracies are running their own in-house espionage programs, including the Smithsonian, the Small Business Administration, and the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), the report stated.

This sprawling apparatus of spying, disruption and manipulation implicates the state in a mind-boggling range of criminal and destructive activities. Covert operations using undercover agents are conducted entirely in secret, and are funded from secret budgets and slush funds that are replenished through the “churning” of funds seized during previous operations back into the agencies' coffers to fund the further expansion of secret programs.

Secret operations orchestrated by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms (ATF) on this basis are increasingly indistinguishable from those of organized crime syndicates, and give a foretaste of what can be expected from the ongoing deployment of counter-revolutionary undercover agents by the military-intelligence apparatus throughout the US.

In 2010, the ATF launched a series of covert operations that used state-run front businesses to seize weapons, drugs, and cash, partly by manipulating mentally disabled and drug addicted individuals, many of them teenagers, according to investigations by the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*.

While posing as owners of pawnshops and drug paraphernalia retail outlets, ATF agents induced cash-desperate and psychologically vulnerable individuals to carry out illegal activities including the purchase and sale of stolen weapons and banned substances.

A number of the ATF-run fake stores exposed by the *Sentinel* were run in “drug free” and “safe” zones near churches and schools. Youths were encouraged to smoke marijuana and play video games at these locations by ATF agents. In one instance reported by the *Sentinel*, a female agent wore revealing attire and flirted with teenage targets while inciting them to acquire weapons and illegal substances to sell to an ATF-run front business, the *Sentinel* found.

The ATF was notorious for its operations in the 1980s where it used agents provocateurs to frame up and jail militant workers involved in industrial strikes. In one infamous case in Milburn, West Virginia an ATF informer was exposed after he tried unsuccessfully to

convince striking coal miners to blow up an abandoned processing facility.

The US government has steadily escalated its domestic clandestine operations in the years since the September 11, 2001, attacks. The New York Police Department (NYPD) intelligence section deployed hundreds of covert agents throughout New York City, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania and New Jersey.

As part of operations coordinated with the CIA and spanning more than a decade, the NYPD paid informants to spy on and “bait” Muslim residents into manufactured terror plots. The security and intelligence agencies refer to this method as “create and capture,” according to a former NYPD asset cited by the *Associated Press*.

It is now obvious these surveillance and infiltration programs, initially focusing on Muslim neighborhoods, were only the first stage in the implementation of a comprehensive espionage and counter-insurgency system targeting the entire population.

Large numbers of informers and FBI agents infiltrated the Occupy Wall Street protests in 2011.

Historically, secret police groups targeted the political and class enemies of the capitalist state using the pretext of defending the nation from dangerous “foreign” elements.

Among the first covert police sections established by the imperialist powers were the British “Special Branch,” originally established as the “Special Irish Branch” in 1883 to target groups opposed to British domination of Ireland. “Special Branch” police intelligence forces were subsequently set up throughout the commonwealth to run cloak-and-dagger missions in service of British imperialism.

Similarly, in an early effort by the US ruling class to develop a secret police force, New York City police commissioner established “Italian Squad” in 1906 to carry out undercover activities against socialist-minded workers in the city's immigrant and working class areas.



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