

CIA releases TV recruiting ad for streaming video services

Kevin Reed
27 June 2020

The Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) has released its first-ever television recruitment advertisement that portrays the covert and criminal US international security service as a glamorous and diverse workplace.

Released on Monday to be run on streaming services such as YouTube and Hulu, the 60-second commercial is made with actors in the style of a pro-US government TV spy thriller such as Showtime's *Homeland*.

With short clips shifting from CIA headquarters in Langley, Virginia to an undisclosed overseas location and an anonymous overseas ministry, it depicts a male African American official addressing a class of CIA recruits in voice-over saying, "It only takes one new piece ... of foreign intelligence ... and everything can change in an instant."

The ad cuts to a scene of a blond female intelligence analyst at headquarters on the phone with her supervisor after she makes a discovery, saying, "I think I found something." Later in the commercial, a young female African American agent carries out a "brush pass"—a handshake exchange of a thumb-drive presumably containing classified information—with an official from an unnamed foreign ministry.

In the end, the African American lecturer says, "The nation ... is counting on you to discover the truth ... Ladies and gentlemen ... welcome ... to the CIA," to a round of applause from his classroom of youthful recruits.

That the activities depicted in the TV commercial—although they are left unspecified—could involve assassination, torture or the overthrow of a government should not be lost on anyone watching the slick presentation.

Nor should the possibility be ignored that the young woman involved in the overseas brush pass might wind up dead. Dozens of CIA agents have been killed in the

field over the past 20 years, many of whom have never been named and are represented by a star in the black Moroccan goatskin-bound book known as the "Book of Honor" on display at the Original Headquarters Building in Langley.

A press release accompanying the TV commercial quotes Sheronda Dorsey, head of CIA Talent Acquisition, saying "We're meeting Americans right where they are—on streaming platforms—to share a glimpse of an exciting CIA career and what it could mean for their futures."

Although the CIA has no problems recruiting agents—every year thousands of applications are submitted for hundreds of available positions and 2019 was reportedly a banner recruiting year—the agency has become less diverse in recent years. According to a study in 2015, "Racial and ethnic minority officers make up 23.9% of the entire CIA workforce, but account for only 10.8% of the Senior Intelligence Service (SIS), 15.2% of GS-15s [highest government pay category], and 21.0% of GS-14s [supervisory government pay category]. A similar gap between the workforce and the leadership ranks exists for minority female officers and officers with disabilities."

CIA recruitment on Ivy League campuses and other elite colleges has been going on since the agency was founded in 1947. In the 1980s, the agency expanded its recruitment to state colleges and universities in an effort to add diversity to its ranks. Under John O. Brennan, who was director from 2013 to 2017, the CIA began recruiting at historically black colleges and universities.

The emphasis on recruiting a "diverse" pool of agents is not an indication that the CIA is becoming more "representative" of the American population. It means that the broader set of targets for spying and

provocation--the Middle East, Latin America, Asia and Africa acquiring greater significance in the calculations of Langley, displacing the single-minded focus on the Soviet bloc during the Cold War--requires different kinds of faces.

Another concern is that the CIA is competing for tech talent with companies based in Silicon Valley and it sees the online streaming TV services as a means of reaching this audience. This points to an emphasis at the agency—and within the US military-intelligence as a whole—on hacking, malicious software and cyberwarfare technologies.

CIA Director Gina Haspel is quoted in the press release for the TV ad, saying, “Since becoming Director, I prioritized how, where, and whom we recruit to be the next generation of CIA officers. Advertising on streaming services is an important step forward to reach talented Americans with the diversity of experiences we require to continue to be the world’s premier intelligence service.”

Haspel was nominated by President Trump and took over at the CIA on May 21, 2018, replacing Mike Pompeo, who became Secretary of State. Her nomination was approved in 10–5 vote by the Senate Intelligence Committee, including supporting votes of two Democrats, despite her direct participation in the CIA torture program during the administration of George W. Bush.

Haspel was in charge of a “black site” torture chamber in Thailand codenamed “Cat’s Eye” in 2002 which included the torture of Abd al-Rahim al-Nashiri. Documents obtained through a freedom of information request dating from November 2002 and were either approved or written by Haspel detail the torture of al-Nashiri including slamming him against a wall, confining him to a small box, waterboarding him and depriving him of sleep and clothing, while threatening to turn him over to others who would kill him and calling him culturally offensive names.

Young people should reject the farcical presentation of employment opportunities at the CIA in the new advertising campaign. They should keep in mind a tweet by former CIA officer and intelligence contractor Edward Snowden at the time of Gina Haspel’s nomination on March 13, 2018, “The new CIA director was a key part of the torture program and its illegal cover-up. Her name was on the Top Secret order

demanding the destruction of tapes to prevent them being seen by Congress. Incredible.”



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact