

WHO IS PAYING FOR DEWEY CLARRIDGE'S OLD SPY NOVELS?

Update: I'm wrong about this being buried—it will be in tomorrow's NYT, so big coverage.

When Jeff Stein reported that Mullah Omar was rushed to a hospital for heart treatment, I was pretty sure the real story was about Dewey Clarridge's Eclipse group, which the NYT had suggested before might be involved in a privatized PsyOp network. As Stein described,

Mullah Omar, the elusive, one-eyed leader of the Afghan Taliban, had a heart attack Jan. 7 and was treated for several days in a Karachi hospital with the help of Pakistan's spy agency, according to a private intelligence network run by former CIA, State Department and military officers.

The intelligence network, operating under the auspices of a private company, "The Eclipse Group," said its source was a physician in the Karachi hospital, which was not identified in the report, who said he saw Omar struggling to recover from an operation to put a stent in his heart.

[snip]

The Eclipse Group is run by Duane "Dewey" Clarridge, a former head of the CIA's Latin American operations who was the first chief of the CIA's counterterrorism center; Kim Stevens, a retired U.S. diplomat who served in Bolivia and Italy; and Brad A. Patty, a civilian advisor to the U.S. Army's 30th Heavy Brigade Combat Team in Iraq from 2007 to 2009.

The Eclipse Group's reports are

available “by invitation only” on its Web site, Stevens said.

By all appearances, the Eclipse network is the just the latest iteration of a shadowy, Pentagon-backed operation that began contracting with former CIA and military operatives to supply intelligence in Afghanistan and Pakistan in 2009. Amid adverse publicity last year, the Pentagon supposedly cut off its funding.

In one of those stories the NYT loves to bury in the Saturday news hole, Mark Mazzetti provides more detail of what Clarridge is up to.

Over the past two years, he has fielded operatives in the mountains of Pakistan and the desert badlands of Afghanistan. Since the United States military cut off his funding in May, he has relied on like-minded private donors to pay his agents to continue gathering information about militant fighters, Taliban leaders and the secrets of Kabul’s ruling class.

[snip]

His dispatches – an amalgam of fact, rumor, analysis and uncorroborated reports – have been sent to military officials who, until last spring at least, found some credible enough to be used in planning strikes against militants in Afghanistan. They are also fed to conservative commentators, including Oliver L. North, a compatriot from the Iran-contra days and now a Fox News analyst, and Brad Thor, an author of military thrillers and a frequent guest of Glenn Beck.

[snip]

On May 15, according to a classified Pentagon report on the private spying operation, he sent an encrypted e-mail

to military officers in Kabul announcing that his network was being shut down because the Pentagon had just terminated his contract. He wrote that he had to “prepare approximately 200 local personnel to cease work.”

In fact, he had no intention of shuttering his operation. The very next day, he set up a password-protected Web site, afpakfp.com, that would allow officers to continue viewing his dispatches.

[snip]

When the military would not listen to him, Mr. Clarridge found other ways to peddle his information.

For instance, his private spies in April and May were reporting that Mullah Muhammad Omar, the reclusive cleric who leads the Afghan Taliban, had been captured by Pakistani officials and placed under house arrest. Associates said Mr. Clarridge believed that Pakistan’s spy service was playing a game: keeping Mullah Omar confined but continuing to support the Afghan Taliban.

Both military and intelligence officials said the information could not be corroborated, but Mr. Clarridge used back channels to pass it on to senior Obama administration officials, including Dennis C. Blair, then the director of national intelligence.

And associates said that Mr. Clarridge, determined to make the information public, arranged for it to get to Mr. Thor, a square-jawed writer of thrillers, a blogger and a regular guest on Mr. Beck’s program on Fox News.

[Click through for details on Clarridge’s effort](#)

to undermine Hamid Karzai—including a plot to collect his beard trimmings to prove he's an opium addict—and for descriptions of Clarridge funneling critical videos to Ollie North on Fox.

~~Now, I noted that the NYT had buried this as they have other stories they'd rather just went away in their Saturday paper. As Mazzetti has in his other reporting on Clarridge's network, he describes the role the NYT's contracting with Clarridge in December 2008 to help find reporter David Rohde had in giving Clarridge's network credibility. What he doesn't mention is that some of the stories Clarridge has been pushing such as Karzai's funding from Iran have been reported on by NYT reporters though I have no reason to believe those stories relied directly on Clarridge. All of which might provide a partial explanation for why this story is a Saturday snoozer rather than the lead story tomorrow or Monday.~~

[See correction above.]

All that said, Mazzetti doesn't yet answer what I consider to be the biggest part of this story: Clarridge's funders.

Several times, Mazzetti explains that after DOD cut Clarridge off last year, he has been funded by unknown private donors.

Who are the donors that would support efforts to get select information and disinformation into the hands of Ollie North, Glenn Beck, and a bunch of other paid propagandists? It's the old Iran-Contra gang back together again, now magnified with the help of Fox News. So who's paying for this latest incarnation of Iran-Contra?