FDL TALKS INTELLIGENCE CONTRACTING WITH TIM SHORROCK

The Washington Post has been turning lots of heads this week with a big series on intelligence contracting. But we here at FDL have been talking about it for years, not least when we hosted Tim Shorrock—who wrote the book on intelligence contracting, Spies for Hire—for a book salon two years ago.In light of all the attention focused on the issue this, week, I asked Shorrock to come back to talk to use about the series, the problems with contracting, and some other issues the WaPo didn't hit.

As I pointed out on Monday, one thing Shorrock emphasized was the degree to which the contractors are partnering with the government to develop longterm strategy.

> Shorrock describes, for example, [Mike] McConnell's key role in the formation of the Intelligence and National Security Alliance (INSA), a trade organization that serves as a bridge between large intelligence contractors (like Booz Allen, SAIC, Computer Sciences Corporation, and ManTech) and the officers from CIA, NSA, and DHS who join them on the board of the organization. "INSA," Shorrock explains, "is one of the only business associations in Washington that include current government officials on their board of directors." Shorrock describes how INSA worked with the DNI (back when John Negroponte was DNI and McConnell was head of INSA and a VP at Booz Allen) to foster information sharing in the intelligence community—including with contractors. He reports that, for the first time in 2006, INSA's contractors

> were consulted on the DNI's strategic plans for the next decade. And Shorrock describes one intelligence veteran wondering "if INSA has become a way for contractors and intelligence officials to create policy in secret, without oversight from Congress."
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> McConnell, after nurturing this enhanced relationship between contractors and government intelligence services, ascended to serve as DNI. He was, Shorrock points out, "the first contractor ever to be named to lead the Intelligence Community." Once confirmed, McConnell immediately buried a report assessing the practice of outsourcing intelligence. And he worked to further expand the ties between government spying and its contractors.
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> [The warrantless wiretap program] not just about Bush and Cheney ignoring laws and spying on citizens (though it **is** that). It's that, in the name of fighting terrorism, the Bush Administration is creating a monstrous new Intelligence-Industrial Complex in which intelligence contractors and the government collaborate—with little oversight—to snoop at home and abroad.

If you're interested in the WaPo piece, I recommend you pick up Shorrock's book for a really exhaustive picture of the problem.

Meanwhile, I'll start off this chat with some questions for Shorrock:

1) I complained the other day that the WaPo had not used the confirmation hearings for James Clapper—which happened yesterday—to contextualize the issues and possible solutions for the problems identified in their story. You've written about Clapper's role in the privatization of intelligence. Assuming he is

confirmed, what are the ramifications for our security and our budget?

2) On Monday's installment, the WaPo used the example of Nidal Hasan to explain the risk of the redundancy and sheer volume of information:

> In the days after the shootings, information emerged about Hasan's increasingly strange behavior at Walter Reed Army Medical Center, where he had trained as a psychiatrist and warned commanders that they should allow Muslims to leave the Army or risk "adverse events." He had also exchanged e-mails with a well-known radical cleric in Yemen being monitored by U.S. intelligence.But none of this reached the one organization charged with handling counterintelligence investigations within the Army. Just 25 miles up the road from Walter Reed, the Army's 902nd Military Intelligence Group had been doing little to search the ranks for potential threats. Instead, the 902's commander had decided to turn the unit's attention to assessing general terrorist affiliations in the United States, even though the Department of Homeland Security and the FBI's 106 Joint Terrorism Task Forces were already doing this work in great depth.

> The 902nd, working on a program the commander named RITA, for Radical Islamic Threat to the Army, had quietly been gathering information on Hezbollah, Iranian Republican Guard and al-Qaeda student organizations in the United States. The assessment "didn't tell us anything we didn't know already," said the Army's senior counterintelligence officer at the Pentagon.

One thing you've written about more than the WaPo is the way in which contractors are

policing the contractors. Yet, to review how the Intelligence Community missed Nidal Hasan's danger, Obama asked William Webster to conduct a review. Webster is the epitome of the kind of guy wandering back and forth from the private contracting world. Why shouldn't we let someone like Webster conduct this review?

3) In discussions of reasons to outsource, there's not much discussion of the efforts to break unions (except in the case of TSA). You work in labor now. To what extent do you think the contracting of lower level employees stems from an anti-union agenda?

4) The WaPo has presented their series as big news. And while it may be to members of the Village, they completely ignored the work you and Jeremy Scahill and others have already done on this problem. Why do you think they did that? And what have you learned from their series?