

“Hollywood is full of CIA agents,” Says Ben Affleck

For decades, the Pentagon and CIA have rewritten scripts and censored Hollywood films—with dire consequences for humanity.

By [Jeremy Kuzmarov](#)

Global Research, April 02, 2022

[CovertAction Magazine](#) 27 March 2022

Region: [USA](#)

Theme: [Intelligence](#)

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*In 2012, **Argo** won the Academy Award for Best Picture. The film starred **Ben Affleck** as a CIA agent named Tony Mendez who poses as a Hollywood producer scouting locations in Iran.*

He helps to rescue six Americans who slipped away from the U.S. embassy during the 1979 Iranian hostage crisis—when Islamic revolutionaries stormed the U.S. embassy and took 66 Americans hostage.

With the CIA reviewing the script, *Argo* [“took many liberties with the truth,”](#) according to *The Atlantic* magazine, [“all geared to make Langley more heroic.”](#)



Ben Affleck, left, and Bryan Cranston, right, in *Argo*, play CIA agents plotting risky operation to save

Americans from Islamic revolutionary terrorists. [Source: keranews.org]

Left out was any hint that the CIA had created the crisis in Iran by backing a coup in 1953 that overthrew Iran's democracy.

A decade earlier, Affleck had starred in *The Sum of All Fears*, a film adaptation of a Tom Clancy novel [written largely by the CIA's entertainment liaison](#), whose main protagonist, Deputy CIA Director Jack Ryan, stops nuclear war from breaking out.

During *Argo's* filming, the [CIA brought the filmmakers to Langley for a tour and offered Affleck access to Agency analysts](#). Former CIA Agent **John Kiriakou** recalled bumping into Affleck in Langley along with other Hollywood stars such as Harrison Ford.

Affleck admitted that ["probably Hollywood is full of CIA agents...we just don't know it."](#)

Theaters of War

Theaters of War: How the Pentagon and CIA Took Hollywood is a new documentary produced by the Media Education Foundation exposing the link between the CIA, Pentagon and Hollywood.

The film follows the journey of media professor Roger Stahl across America as he interviews people—including industry insiders—who detail how the military and CIA have tried to valorize their activities in hundreds of Hollywood films and television shows, scrubbing scripts of war crimes, corruption, racism, sexual assault, coups, assassinations and torture.

The propaganda is extremely effective because it is carried out under the guise of entertainment. Only very subtly are viewers conditioned.

Fetishizing the U.S. Military

One of the most poignant scenes of *Theaters of War* has Stahl bringing Oliver Stone a framed copy of a 1984 rejection letter he received by the Pentagon's entertainment office for *Platoon*, a film about the disintegration of the armed forces in Vietnam. In 1987, *Platoon* won the Academy award.



Donald E. Baruch, the head of the Pentagon's Office on Entertainment, wrote to Stone in the rejection letter: ["In our opinion, the script basically creates an unbalanced portrayal by stereotyping black soldiers, showing rampant drug abuse, illiteracy and concentrating action on brutality."](#)

Stone told Stahl that for years he had to shelve *Platoon*, whose script was written in 1975, along with *Born on the Fourth of July*, another anti-war film based on the biography of paralyzed veteran Ron Kovic.

According to Stone, the Pentagon's entertainment office was "set up to provide accuracy to film-making about the military, but instead they do the opposite; they promote inaccuracies and lies."

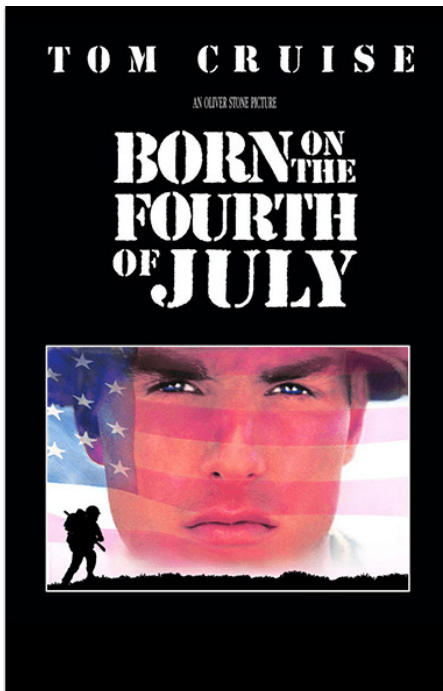
"They only want movies that glorify the American soldier, glorify our patriotism, the homeland and nationalism, this nonsense. They fetishize the military," he said. "Nobody can say a bad word about [the military], which is wrong. You have to point out evil when it happens."

Whitewashing Military Corruption

Stone told Stahl that, while he was having trouble getting *Platoon* made, he was offered the script for *Top Gun*, a major hit of 1986 which romanticized the life of Navy pilots and had military recruiting stations set up outside theaters where it was being screened.

The Pentagon had donated F-14s for making *Top Gun*, which it praised for helping to "completely rehabilitate the military's image [after it] had been savaged by the Vietnam War."

In 2018, the Pentagon signed a contract with the producers of a *Top Gun* remake scheduled for release this year that allowed it to "weave in key talking points, oversee the script and require an official screening before its release."



The original *Top Gun* was directed by the late Tony Scott and produced by Jerry Bruckheimer, who went on to produce *Black Hawk Down* (2001), a re-creation of the ambush of U.S. soldiers in Somalia.

Oliver Stone called *Black Hawk Down*, a “nonsense movie” and typical “whitewash of military corruption.”

After days of negotiation with Bruckheimer, Secretary of Defense William Cohen donated equipment for the film and the script was changed from the original to create heroes of the U.S. soldiers, even though the intervention was widely considered, as Stone put it, “a mess.”

The Godfather

According to Stahl, the Pentagon and CIA are equivalent to the Godfather: They decide what films get made and what films get shelved, and buy off film-makers by promising them access to the Pentagon’s toys.

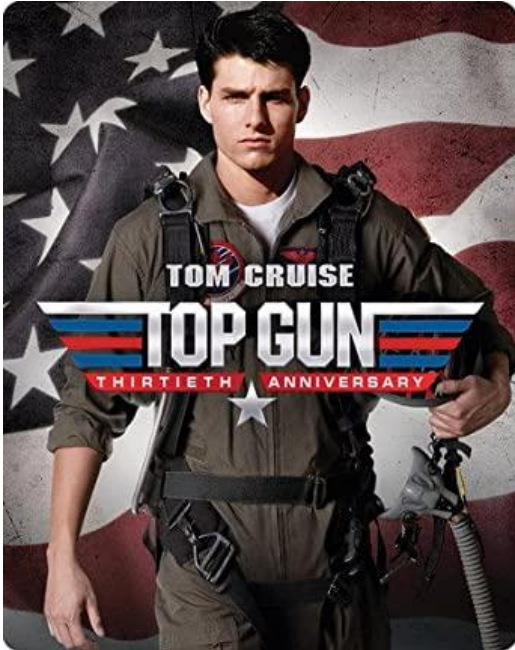
In the 1980s, films that did not get made included a dramatization of the Iran-Contra affair and film about the reduction of Cold War tensions, which was substituted with *Red Dawn*, in which a group of high school students led by Patrick Swayze and Charlie Sheen organize themselves to fight a Soviet invasion of the U.S. (a 2012 sequel had students organizing against a North Korean invasion).

From 1989 to 2018, the Pentagon’s Office on Entertainment was directed by Phil Strub, who worked closely with favored directors such as Bruckheimer and Michael Bay, producer of *Transformers* (2007), and helped promote sci-fi films where superheroes saved civilization with military weapons in alliance with the U.S. military.

Strub had a scene removed from *The Windtalkers* (2002), where U.S. Marines took out the gold teeth of Japanese soldiers they had killed as trophies—something described in E.B. Sledge’s classic memoir, *With the Old Breed: At Peleliu and Okinawa* (1981).

Strub also made sure that *Tuskegee Airmen* (1995), about Black fighters in World War II, presented the Army's top generals as non-racists (the only racists in the film were depicted as bad apples).

The U.S. army subsidized TV series *The Long Road Home* (2017), meanwhile, depicted Tomas Young, a paralyzed Iraq veteran and peace activist, as a "pussy" and douchebag," when, according to members of his platoon, he was "well liked," and considered "cool."



Young's portrayal was consistent with the denigration of antiwar veterans and activists in popular culture, which the Pentagon's Office on Entertainment was in part behind.

No Guts or Glory

Strub and his predecessor Don Baruch cultivated an academic hack, Lawrence Suid, to cover up the truth about what the Pentagon's entertainment office did.

Suid wrote the book *Guts & Glory: The Making of the American Military Image in Film* (Lexington, KY: The University Press of Kentucky, 2002) which for years stood as the definitive work on the Pentagon and Hollywood.

When more independent scholars came along to challenge Suid's interpretations, Suid savagely attacked them in academic journals and tried to ruin their careers.

Wagging the Dog

[Chase Brandon](#), the CIA's entertainment industry liaison from 1996 to 2007 and first cousin of actor Tommy Lee Jones, was [thought to be the prototype for Robert DeNiro's character, Conrad Breen, in Wag the Dog \(1997\)](#). Breen was a CIA spin doctor who manufactures a fictional war in Albania to displace attention from a presidential sex scandal.

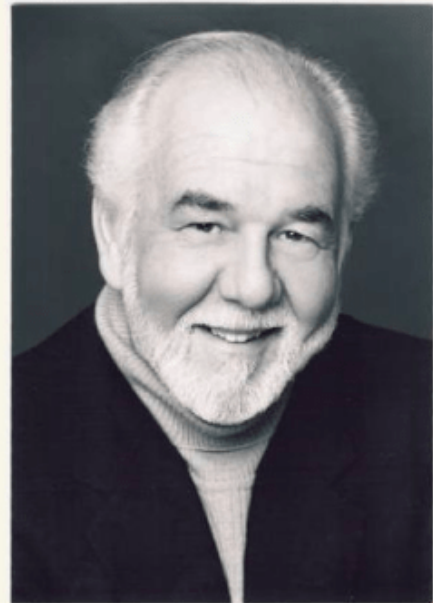
A [forty-year CIA veteran with experience in special operations and psychological warfare](#), Brandon [wrote most of the script for the 2003 film The Recruit](#), and helped set up a permanent CIA network in Hollywood that Ben Affleck hinted at.

Film credits, appearances, interviews, articles

A broader range of Mr. Brandon's film credits and technical consultant roles include *The Recruit*, *Sum of All Fears*, *Enemy of the State*, *Bad Company*, *Mission Impossible III*, *Meet the Parents*, *In the Company of Spies*, *The Good Shepherd*, *Charlie Wilson's War*, *Spy Game*, *The Interpreter* and others; and he has been the technical consultant and advisor for television programs including ABC's acclaimed mini-series *The Path to 9-11*, as well as other network series such as *The Agency*, *Alias*, *24*, *JAG*, *The Agency* and *Air America*.

He has made numerous appearances on Discovery, Learning, and History Channels in "host, narrator or commentator" roles; and on PBS, A&E and other documentaries; and he has been interviewed on E-Entertainment, Access Hollywood, Entertainment Tonight and other film industry news programs.

A number of major movie DVD "special feature" sections include interviews and expert commentary by Chase Brandon.



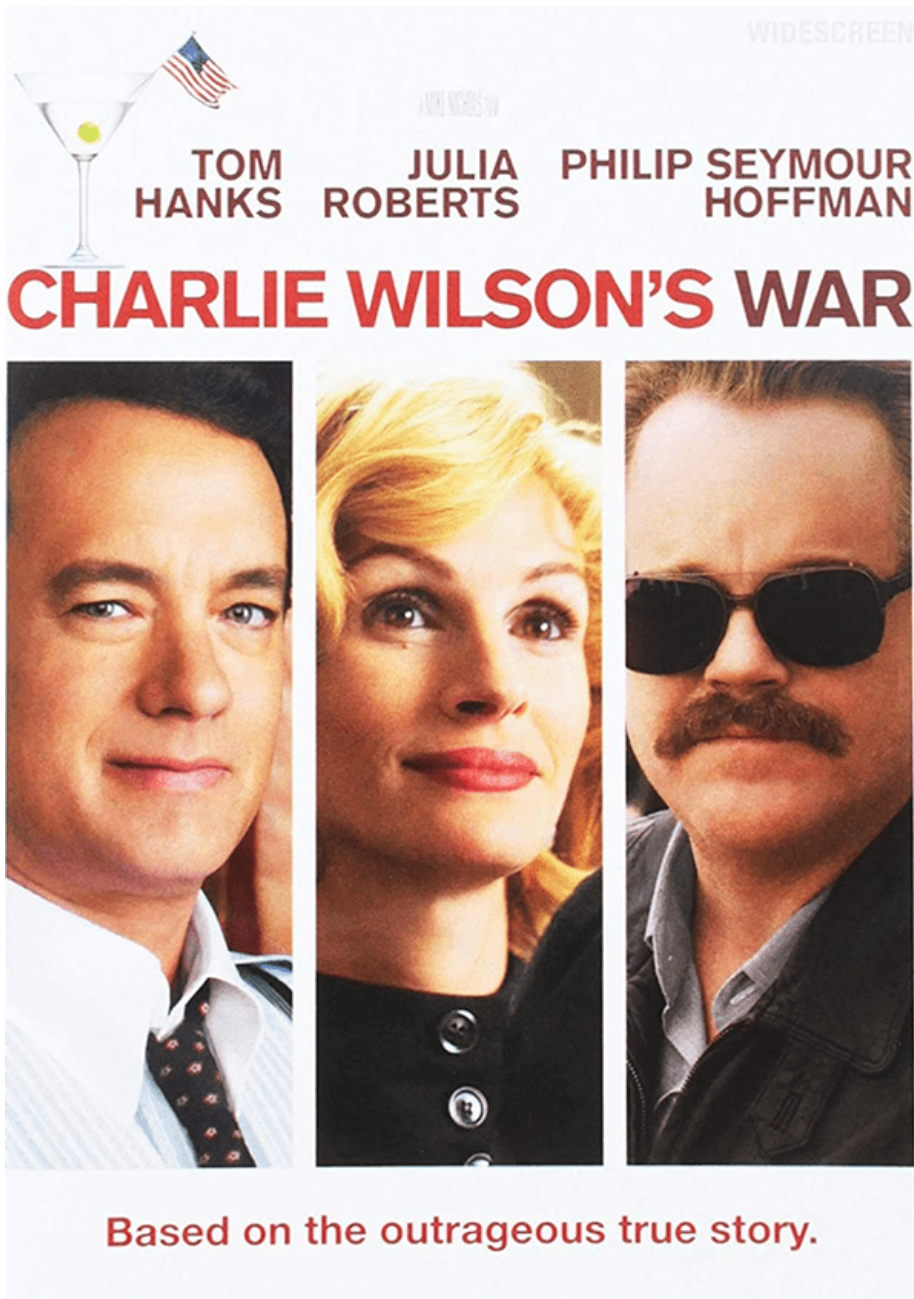
Source: spyculture.com

The network included Affleck's ex-wife, Jennifer Garner, who played CIA Agent Sydney Bristow in the hit TV series *Alias* (2001-2006), and filmed a recruitment video for the CIA. See video [here](#). *Alias*'s writers worked with Brandon who helped "educate them on fundamental tradecraft."

Brandon's office also altered the script of the 2000 comedy *Meet the Parents*, which featured Robert DeNiro as a CIA agent whose daughter has decided to marry a goofball played by Ben Stiller.

When Stiller's character enters DeNiro's workspace, in the original script, he finds CIA torture manuals. However, the script was changed to show Stiller finding only pictures of DeNiro's character meeting famous people like Bill Clinton.

Another film that Brandon helped shape was [Charlie Wilson's War \(2007\) which heroized the CIA for defeating the evil commies in Afghanistan](#). CIA agent Milt Beardon served as one of the film's consultants.



Source: [amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com/Charlie-Wilson-War-2007)

Brandon further worked as a technical adviser and consultant for action movies that made the CIA seem exciting and noble: *Mission Impossible 3* (2006), *Enemy of the State* (1998), *The Bourne Identity* (2002) and *The Sum of All Fears* (2002) starring Ben Affleck.

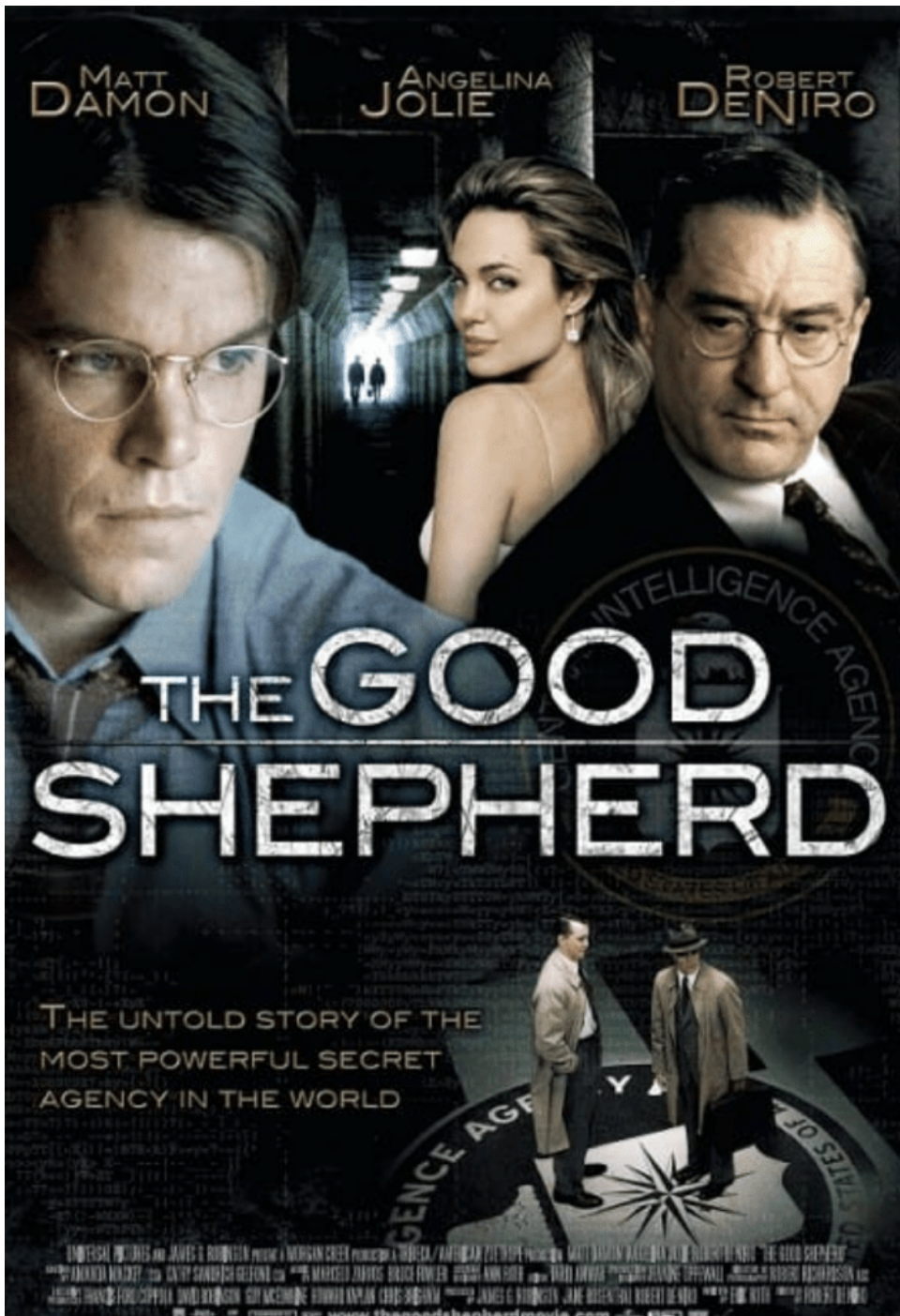
He additionally provided true to life storylines for the TV series *The Agency* (2001-2003), including ones focused on the drone assassinations of a rogue Pakistani General and another one about an anthrax attack in Washington D.C. which was originally scheduled to air the very day of the actual anthrax attacks in Washington that were [likely part of a CIA false-flag operation](#).^[1]

The Good Shepherd—More Historical Distortions

Yet another film Brandon helped influence was *The Good Shepherd* (2006), directed by Robert DeNiro and starring Matt Damon, which while portraying CIA misdeeds, focuses largely on their [impact on the personal lives of CIA agents](#)—rather than the people of the

countries affected.^[2]

The Good Shepherd further distorted history by a) [making it seem like the Agency supported De-Nazification](#) when it recruited Nazis for the Cold War under the Operation Paperclip; b) [depicting the head of the CIA being forced to resign because his personal business interests in Guatemala prompted the 1954 coup](#) (CIA Director Allen Dulles whose law firm had represented the United Fruit Company, never had to resign for this reason); and c) [depicting the CIA's failure to overthrow the Castro government as the result of the Cubans being tipped off by Soviet intelligence](#), when there had been broad popular mobilization for Fidel Castro.



Source: moviefanatic.com

Promoting the CIA's Favored Techniques

After the 9/11 attacks, the CIA supported Fox's 24, which advanced the idea that torture in interrogation worked.^[3]



Torture depicted in Fox's show 24. [Source: motherjones.com]

The CIA subsequently supported the 2012 film *Zero Dark Thirty* dramatizing the hunt for Osama bin Laden, which went too far for even a rabid war hawk like John McCain (R-AZ), who repudiated torture following [his own alleged experience being tortured in the Vietnam War](#).

The CIA additionally supported the Emmy-award winning *Showtime* series *Homeland* (2011-present), Barack Obama's favorite show. It depicted Muslims as ["overwhelmingly sadistic, barbaric, and morally bankrupt,"](#) according to *The New Yorker*, and [drone strikes and targeted killings as morally just](#).^[4]

Most recently, the CIA collaborated in the production of the Jack Ryan series—a spinoff on military enthusiast Tom Clancy's novels—on *Amazon Prime*.

In one episode, Ryan (played by John Krasinski from *The Office*) plots the overthrow of a tyrannical leader in Venezuela, who Ryan helps replace with an enlightened, pro-democratic reformer.

The latter is a stand-in for America's boy, Juan Guaidó, who actually has extreme right-wing leanings and led violent protests against a legally elected government that is socialist.

Evasion of U.S. Law

Theaters of War ends by pointing out that the U.S. has well-established laws against propaganda which the CIA and Pentagon have clearly violated.

The consequences for society are greater than most people realize. The manipulation of Hollywood drives support for U.S. military and CIA interventions that have caused humanitarian catastrophes, and reinforces a nativist, imperialist and often racist worldview that lies at the root of repeated foreign policy disasters.

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Jeremy Kuzmarov is Managing Editor of *CovertAction Magazine*. He is the author of four books on U.S. foreign policy, including *Obama's Unending Wars* (Clarity Press, 2019) and *The Russians Are Coming, Again*, with John Marciano (Monthly Review Press, 2018). He can be reached at: jkuzmarov2@gmail.com.

Notes

1. Brandon was a consultant for at least 11 TV series including: *The Path to 9/11*, *Alias*, *JAG*, *Air America*, *Covert Action*, *Top Secret Missions of the CIA*, *Stories of the CIA*, *Spies Above Us* and *Greatest Intelligence Agency*.
2. CIA agent Milt Beardon served as a consultant to the film.
3. [Chase Brandon was a technical adviser to the show.](#)
4. [Homeland's cast visited Langley where the show held its premiere. Some scenes were also shot at Langley and CIA agents served as consultants to the show.](#)

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