

Private Spies: The Secret World of Intelligence Outsourcing

By [Tom Burghardt](#)

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CACI Grabs Scottish Census Contract, Ignites Political Firestorm Over Torture Allegations

Glasgow's [Sunday Herald](#) reported July 27 that a British subsidiary of CACI International was awarded an £18.5 million (\$36.6) contract by the Scottish government to carry out the country's next census. The announcement ignited a political firestorm.

Leading human rights and antiwar organizations have condemned the deal and threatened the Scottish National Party (SNP) government with a mass boycott should the agreement stand.

On June 30, the [Center for Constitutional Rights](#) and other law firms filed a series of civil lawsuits against CACI International, Inc., CACI Premier Technology and L-3 Services Inc., a division of L-3 Communications over allegations of torture at Iraq's infamous Abu Ghraib prison. *AFC* has previously reported on these landmark cases, see: "[Abu Ghraib Torture Claims Spook CACI, L-3 Communications](#)."

Sunday Herald investigations editor Neil Mackay writes,

Granting CACI (UK) — a subsidiary of the firm accused of torture — the £18.5 million contract has not only badly wounded the SNP government's claims of being more ethical than Labour and putting human rights at the top of its agenda, but has also led to fears personal data on millions of Scots collected by the company might be sifted by the US government given the close relationship between the Bush administration and the CACI head office in Arlington, Virginia. ("Scottish Government Hires Firm Accused of Torture in Iraq," *Sunday Herald*, 27 July 2008)

As strategic partners in Washington's "global war on terror," private corporations, particularly those in the defense and burgeoning "homeland security" industries, have been incorporated into the state's intelligence apparatus—with little or no accountability and even less oversight.

Human rights' lawyer John Scott told Mackay, "The government is opening itself up to significant and justified protest. Ordinary members of the public could refuse to have anything to do with the census. A boycott is something to be considered. It would be a legitimate step. We cannot ignore our principles."

As outrage grows over the deal, [The Stop the War Coalition](#), a UK-wide organization that has mobilized mass opposition to the illegal invasion and occupation of Iraq, launched a

petition drive against the contract. The SWC [petition](#) states “awarding millions of taxpayers’ money to a subsidiary of a firm that has benefited from a contract at Abu Ghraib, profiting from an illegal and immoral occupation, is contrary to the views of the majority of the Scottish public.”

Aamer Anwar, a prominent human rights attorney with the organization [Scotland Against Criminalising Communities](#) told the *Sunday Herald*, “the US government doesn’t give a damn about people’s rights, it’ll gather data in any way possible how can we be sure that the census information will not be handed over to the US government in the interests of homeland security?”

Private Spies: A Cautionary Tale

Anwar’s concerns are indeed justified. In May, the [San Diego Union-Tribune](#) reported on the case of Col. Larry Richards, a Marine reservist stationed at Camp Pendleton. According to investigative journalist Rick Rogers, Richards, a group of fellow Marines and law enforcement officers, including the cofounder of the Los Angeles County Terrorist Early Warning Center (LACTEW), stole secret files from the Strategic Technical Operations Center.

While Col. Richards and the other conspirators described below had no relationship to CACI or its web of worldwide affiliates their case however, is illustrative of the inherent dangers of employing *private* corporations with ties to the military-industrial-surveillance complex to perform sensitive *public* functions.

Created in 1996, the LACTEW has been described by the FBI and the Office of National Intelligence as “a model for others to emulate,” according to the [ACLU](#). The LACTEW has since “evolved” into the the Joint Regional Intelligence Center (JRIC) in Los Angeles. When not on active duty, Richards worked as a “top specialist” at LACTEW, according to the *Union-Tribune*.

But when he was working at Camp Pendleton, Richards’ private spy ring stole hundreds of classified files, including those marked “Top Secret, Special Compartmentalized Information,” the highest U.S. Government classification. The files included surveillance dossiers on the Muslim community and antiwar activists in Southern California.

Members of the ring included a Marine Gunnery Sgt., Gary Maziarz, who was given access to Richards’ “logon and password to access confidential computer accounts on the Joint Worldwide Intelligence Communications System and Secret Internet Protocol Router Network,” while Richards was deployed to Iraq, the *Union-Tribune* reported.

Another conspirator was Lauren Martin, an intelligence analyst at U.S. Northern Command ([NORTHCOM](#)) headquarters in Colorado Springs, Colorado. NORTHCOM manages information about potential terrorism operations nationwide, and “Martin was responsible for the region that included Southern California, Maziarz testified” during his court martial.

While the private spies claimed they were acting on “patriotic motives” and were seeking to “minimize the threat of a terrorist attack,” Richards and the others, Rogers reported, “shared anti-terrorism intelligence with defense contractors in exchange for future employment.”

Among the firms being “scrutinized” for possible links to the ultranationalist spy ring are

[Kroll Associates](#), described as “a risk-management firm,” and [MPRI International Group](#), a “private military contractor” owned by [L-3 Communications](#), a codefendant in the CCR lawsuit. According to Richards’ account to investigators, MPRI allegedly offered him “\$300,000 to work in Afghanistan,” the *Union-Tribune* reported.

Rogers reported that Kroll’s clients included the city of San Diego and that some of its employees have had ties to the Los Angeles County Terrorist Early Warning Center. MPRI denied that Richards ever worked for the firm. Kroll refused to comment on the allegations to the *Union-Tribune*.

As the American Civil Liberties Union [documents](#) in their update on the groups’ November 2007 report on Fusion Centers, which LACTEW served as a “model,”

In the six months since our report, new press accounts have borne out many of our warnings. In just that short time, news accounts have reported overzealous intelligence gathering, the expansion of uncontrolled access to data on innocent people, hostility to open government laws, abusive entanglements between security agencies and the private sector, and lax protections for personally identifiable information. (Mike German and Jay Stanley, “Fusion Center Update,” ACLU, July 29, 2008)

While there was no CACI involvement in the scandal, the question must still be asked: will the “abusive entanglements between security agencies and the private sector” be replicated in Scotland?

Considering the breathtaking reach of the Official Secrets Act and the shocking abuses perpetrated by British intelligence agencies against their own citizens, many of which have been documented by the [Pat Finucane Centre for Human Rights and Social Change](#), this is not an issue that should be taken lightly.

Will Data Be More Secure in Scotland?

Given serious and well-documented data-security breaches in the United States and elsewhere, egregious civil liberties violations, as well as the seamless relationships that exist among the military, law enforcement and private security contractors with a vested interest in hyping the “terrorist threat,” the concerns of Scottish human rights’ campaigners are hardly misplaced.

The Scottish government for its part, have denied the charges and defended its actions by claiming CACI (UK) was not involved in defense work and was a “separate legal entity from its US parent company. Allegations of improper conduct made against the parent company have been vehemently denied, but in any event there is no link between these allegations and the work of CACI (UK),” the *Sunday Herald* reported.

Claiming the government “would never be a party” with any company “convicted” of human rights abuses, SNP spokespeople asserted that their choice of the firm was based solely on claims that CACI’s offer represented “the best and most competitively priced of the bids we received, delivering best value for tax-payers’ money.”

The government contended it “could not take unproven allegations into consideration”. The SNP government also claimed that personal information would be protected through

“independent audits of security,” according to Mackay’s report.

CACI (UK) maintained that allegations of abuse at Abu Ghraib “was not substantiated by any evidence or proof, and subsequent investigations by both CACI and the US government could not confirm it. No CACI employee was ever depicted in the shocking and disturbing photos seen in the press.”

Despite CACI assertions to the contrary, photographic evidence indeed exists and was published more than *two years earlier*. In April 2006, [Salon](#) investigative journalist Mark Benjamin published a photograph of CACI International interrogator Daniel Johnson, a defendant in CCR’s lawsuit against the company, interrogating an Iraqi prisoner in what Army investigators described as “an unauthorized stress position.” According to Benjamin,

The Army investigated the circumstances behind the photograph, found “probable cause” that a crime had been committed, and referred the case to the Justice Department for prosecution. (**Salon** obtained the photo from someone who spent time at Abu Ghraib as a uniformed member of the military and is familiar with the Army investigation there.) But in early 2005, a Department of Justice attorney told the Army that the evidence in the case did not justify prosecution. (“No Justice for All,” *Salon*, April 14, 2006)

Indeed, the Army’s Criminal Investigation Command (CID) told *Salon* their office had “investigated the circumstances” surrounding the incident and found “probable cause to believe a crime was committed by civilian contractors.” However, after the case was referred to the Department of Justice, “an assistant U.S. attorney in Virginia told the Army that he had reviewed the Johnson case and found there was ‘insufficient evidence’ to prosecute.”

There the case against Johnson and other contractors languished until this May when CCR initiated a lawsuit in Los Angeles federal district court, brought by a former “ghost” detainee at the notorious Abu Ghraib prison and torture center. That case was filed against *another* former CACI contract employee, Steven Stefanowicz, aka “Big Steve.”

As I reported in July, CCR attorneys were forced to file separate civil suits only after a federal District of Columbia judge in 2004 refused the attorney’s petition to consolidate some 237 victims’ abuse claims as a class-action lawsuit. The judge ruled he “lacked jurisdiction,” not that the charges were “baseless allegations,” as CACI maintains. The original complaint is still pending. Why then, was CACI less than forthcoming?

How Is this Relevant to the Issue of the Scottish Census?

As the ACLU forcefully argues, “the elements of [a] nascent domestic surveillance system include: Watching and recording the everyday activities of an ever-growing list of individuals; channeling the flow of the resulting reports into a centralized security agency; sifting through (‘data mining’) these reports and databases with computers to identify individuals for closer scrutiny.” (ACLU, *op. cit.*)

A centralized database of census information culled by a private corporation with long-standing ties to the military-industrial-surveillance complex sets up a system ripe with the *potential* for abuse, particularly if such data were to fall-or drop-into the wrong hands, as feared by human rights, antiwar and civil liberties advocates.

CACI is not some eager start-up; rather the firm has been described as “one of the Pentagon’s favorite contractors” by Tim Shorrock in his essential book, [Spies For Hire: The Secret World of Intelligence Outsourcing](#).

And according to *Washington Technology’s* “[Top 100 Federal Prime Contractors: 2008](#),” CACI International, Inc. clocked-in at No. 17 with some \$1,337,472,153 in total revenue. Some \$1,105,765,855 or 82.6% was a result of defense-related contracts for IT and network services, data information, management services and what the publication terms “integrated security and intelligence solutions.”

Meanwhile, the victims of heinous abuse and torture that resulted from policies crafted at the highest levels of the Bush administration, and with the alleged complicity of many of their “outsourced” partners, are still awaiting their day in court and a modicum of justice.

For more information on CCR’s lawsuits see: “New Abu Ghraib Torture Claims Filed Against Military Contractors,” [Press Release](#), May 5, 2008 and “CCR Files Four New Abu Ghraib Lawsuits Targeting Military Contractors in U.S. Courts,” [Press Release](#), June 30, 2008.

Tom Burghardt is a researcher and activist based in the San Francisco Bay Area. In addition to publishing in Covert Action Quarterly, Love & Rage and Antifa Forum, he is the editor of Police State America: U.S. Military “Civil Disturbance” Planning, distributed by [AK Press](#).

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