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NOTE: Thanks to the good folks at for this; the disinfopedia is quite a deft idea. --kl, pp

http://www.prwatch.org/spin/April_2003.html#1051243200 PRWatch Mon 4-21-03 Spin of the Day

Rendon's War Is Peace

The secretive Rendon Group , run by self-proclaimed "information warrior" John Rendon, has a long history of accompanying the CIA and Pentagon into battle. Now they have launched a project called " Empower Peace ," through which they are calling on young people throughout the world to "help us develop an International Youth Pledge of Peace ." Does this mean they've joined the anti-war protests? Not exactly. Empower Peace wants people "not to refer to the current political situation going on in the world today but rather focus and emphasize on the importance of breaking down cultural barriers in order to achieve peace."

http://www.disinfopedia.org/wiki.phtml?title=Rendon_Group Disinfopedia Profile The Rendon Group

Rendon Group

From Disinfopedia, the encyclopedia of propaganda.

The Rendon Group is a secretive public relations firm that has assisted a number of U.S. military interventions in nations including Argentina, Colombia, Haiti, Iraq, Kosovo, Panama and Zimbabwe. Rendon's activities include organizing the Iraqi National Congress , a PR front group designed to foment the overthrow of Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein.

In a 1998 speech to the National Security Conference (NSC), John Rendon described himself as "an information warrior, and a perception manager. This is probably best described in the words of Hunter S. Thompson, when he wrote 'When things turn weird, the weird turn pro.'"

"Through its network of international offices and strategic alliances," the Rendon Group website boasted in 2002, "the company has provided communications services to clients in more than 78 countries, and maintains contact with government officials, decision-makers, and news media around the globe."

History

Company founder John Rendon began his career as an election campaign consultant to Democratic Party politicians. According to Franklin Foer , "He masterminded Michael Dukakis 's gubernatorial campaign in 1974; worked as executive director of the Democratic National Committee in the Jimmy Carter era; managed the 1980 Democratic convention in New York; and subsequently worked as chief scheduler for Carter's reelection campaign."

In the mid-1980s, however, he began working for clients in the Caribbean and other places outside the United States. His "career took an unlikely turn in Panama, where his work with political opponents of Manuel Noriega kept him in the country straight through the 1989 American invasion. As U.S. forces quickly invaded and quickly pulled out, he helped broker the transition of power." This in turn led to contacts with the CIA, and in 1990 the government-in-exile of Kuwait hired him to help drum up support for war in the Persian Gulf to oust Iraq's occupying army. [1]

According to Rendon's web site, it "established a full-scale communications operation for the Government of Kuwait, including the establishment of a production studio in London producing programming material for the exiled Kuwaiti Television." Rendon also provided media support for exiled government leaders and helped Kuwaiti officials after the war by "providing press and site advance to incoming congressional delegations and other visiting US government officials."

Rendon's work in Kuwait continued after the war itself had ended. "If any of you either participated in the liberation of Kuwait City ... or if you watched it on television, you would have seen hundreds of Kuwaitis waving small American flags," John Rendon said in his speech to the NSC. "Did you ever stop to wonder how the people of Kuwait City, after being held hostage for seven long and painful months, were able to get hand-held American flags? And for that matter, the flags of other coalition countries? Well, you now know the answer. That was one of my jobs."

Rendon was also a major player in the CIA's effort to encourage the overthrow of Saddam Hussein. In May 1991, then-President George Bush, Sr. signed a presidential finding directing the CIA to create the conditions for Hussein's removal. The hope was that members of the Iraqi military would turn on Hussein and stage a military coup. The CIA did not have the mechanisms in place to make that happen, so they hired the Rendon Group to run a covert anti-Saddam propaganda campaign. Rendon's postwar work involved producing videos and radio skits ridiculing Saddam Hussein, a traveling photo exhibit of Iraqi atrocities, and radio scripts calling on Iraqi army officers to defect.

A February 1998 report by Peter Jennings cited records obtained by ABC News which showed that the Rendon Group spent more than \$23 million dollars in the first year of its contract with the CIA. It worked closely with the Iraqi National Congress (INC), an opposition coalition of 19 Iraqi and Kurdish organizations whose main tasks were to "gather information, distribute propaganda and recruit dissidents." According to ABC, Rendon came up with the name for the Iraqi National Congress and channeled \$12 million of covert CIA funding to it between 1992 and 1996. Writing in The New Yorker, Seymour Hersh says the Rendon Group was "paid close to a hundred million dollars by the CIA" for its work with the INC. [2]

ClandestineRadio.com, a website which monitors underground and anti- government radio stations in countries throughout the world, credits the Rendon Group with "designing and supervising" the Iraqi Broadcasting Corporation (IBC) and Radio Hurriah , which began broadcasting Iraqi opposition propaganda in January 1992 from a US government transmitter in Kuwait. According to a September 1996 article in Time magazine, six CIA case officers supervised the IBC's 11 hours of daily programming and Iraqi National Congress activities in the Iraqi Kurdistan city of Arbil. According to a Harvard graduate student from Iraq who helped translate some of the radio broadcasts into Arabic, the

program was poorly run. "No one in-house spoke a word of Arabic," he says. "They thought I was mocking Saddam, but for all they knew I could have been lambasting the US government." The scripts, he adds, were often ill conceived. "Who in Iraq is going to think it's funny to poke fun at Saddam's mustache," the student notes, "when the vast majority of Iraqi men themselves have mustaches?" [3] In any case, the propaganda campaign came to an abrupt end on August 31, 1996, when the Iraqi army invaded Arbil and executed all but 12 out of 100 IBC staff workers along with about 100 members of the Iraqi National Congress.

Franklin Foer reports that Rendon has been dogged throughout his career "by complaints of profligate spending--even charged with being the PR equivalent of the Pentagon's \$400 toilet seat. In 1995 CIA accountants demanded an audit of his work. As ABC reported in 1998, Rendon's own records show he spent more than \$23 million in the first year of his contract to work with the INC. Several of his operatives in London earned more than the director of Central Intelligence--about \$19,000 per month. Rendon shot across the Atlantic on the Concorde, while his subordinates flew on open business-class tickets. According to one of those subordinates, "There was no incentive for Rendon to hold down costs." Others have complained that his work is often inept and ineffective. However, he continues to win contracts because he is "superbly networked" with friends in high places in Washington. [4]

Newspapers reported in October 2001 that the Pentagon had awarded Rendon a four-month, \$397,000 contract to handle PR aspects of U.S. military strikes in Afghanistan. Rendon and Pentagon officials declined to discuss details of the firm's work, which reportedly included monitoring international news media, conducting focus groups, creating a web site about the US campaign against terrorism, and recommending "ways the US military can counter disinformation and improve its own public communications." [5]

The New York Times reported in February 2002 that the U.S. Pentagon was using the Rendon Group to assist its new propaganda agency, the Office of Strategic Information (OSI). However, the OSI was publicly disbanded following a backlash when Pentagon officials said the new office would engage in "black" propaganda (disinformation). [6][7]

In 2003, Rendon launched a web site called "Empower Peace," through which they called on young people throughout the world to "help us develop an International Youth Pledge of Peace." Does this mean they've joined the anti-war protests? Not exactly. Empower Peace wants people "not to refer the current political situation going on in the world today but rather focus and emphasize on the importance of breaking down cultural barriers in order to achieve peace." [8]

Personnel

* John Rendon

* Linda Flohr, a CIA covert operations veteran, worked for the Rendon Group at one point before returning to the government, where she is now a top anti-terrorism official at the White House's National Security Council. * Frances Brooke worked in the mid-1990s on the Rendon Group's anti-Iraq campaign in London at a salary of \$19,000 a month. He subsequently became the chief assistant in Washington to Ahmad Chalabi, head of the Iraqi National Congress.

Clients

Clients of the Rendon Group have included a number of foreign nations, as well as major corporations. Known specific clients have included:

- *ÝÝÝÝÝ American Housing Consortium (based in Kuwait)
- *ÝÝÝÝÝ American Business Council of Kuwait
- *ÝÝÝÝÝ Bulgaria
- *ÝÝÝÝÝ Colombian army
- *ÝÝÝÝÝ Indonesia
- *ÝÝÝÝÝ KPMY/Peat Marwick
- *ÝÝÝÝÝ Kuwait
- *ÝÝÝÝÝ Kuwait Petroleum Corporation
- *ÝÝÝÝÝ Kuwait University
- *ÝÝÝÝÝ Monsanto Chemical Company
- *ÝÝÝÝÝ Russia
- *ÝÝÝÝÝ United States
- *ÝÝÝÝÝ U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID)
- *ÝÝÝÝÝ U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA)
- *ÝÝÝÝÝ U.S. Pentagon
- *ÝÝÝÝÝ Uzbekistan
- *ÝÝÝÝÝ Vietnam Veterans of America Foundation (which it helped promote a ban on landmines)

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External Links

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November 13, 2002

*ÝÝÝÝÝEmpower PeaceÝ web site

<http://www.empowerpeace.com/pages/home.html> Empowering Peace