

By Chris Floyd

From [Empire Burlesque](#) | Original Article

One unanticipated benefit of the relentless drive to turn every nook and cranny of the American war machine into a cash cow for private profit is the fact that so much of the nitty-gritty operational work is now put out for bids. And this can give us an occasional glimpse -- through the weeds of contract arcana -- of what our poobahs and satraps are really up to on the far-flung fields of empire.

For example, in olden times -- when war pork was confined more to vittles and blankets and bullets and such -- we might never have known of the latest development in the not-at-all-ended American occupation of Iraq. [As the New York Times reports](#), Iraqis were outraged this week to find they are being spied upon by a fleet of American drones hovering constantly in their supposedly sovereign skies, long after the supposed withdrawal of American forces. Once, such an operation might have flown below radar (so to speak), rigged up on a secret base somewhere and operated by actual soldiers or government agents: no public acknowledgement -- and certainly no advertising -- necessary. But in our era of the ever-accelerating revolving door -- where policymakers and profiteers blend into a single, dizzying, shit-brown blur of corruption -- the call to the trough often trumps other concerns.

And so the existence of the drone operation in Iraq was revealed in an obscure government report containing a "two-page online prospectus for companies that might bid on a contract to manage" the robotic voyeurism. (The supposedly sovereign Iraqis were not even told of program -- much less asked for their permission. What's it to them, anyway?)

Of course, the drone op is run by the State Department not the Pentagon -- but this is a distinction without a difference. Just as the military now carries out endless "nation-building" programs in the nations it destroys, the "diplomatic corps" has become a bristling militarized beast, commanding thousands of mercenaries and various covert operators -- such as Raymond Davis in Pakistan -- who use State's diplomatic cover to spy, subvert and kill the occasional local yokel in countries all over the world. Foggy Bottom and [Hell's Bottom](#) (the original name for the Virginia swampland where the Pentagon was built) are simply two heads of the same hydra, with the same mission: enforcing American domination of the world.

(To see this mission stripped down to its stark, hideous, undeniable essence, read [the remarkable new post by Arthur Silber here](#) .)

In its usual demure fashion, the Times sketches the real nature of the State Department's operations in Iraq:

The drones are the latest example of the State Department's efforts to take over functions in Iraq that the military used to perform. Some 5,000 private security contractors now protect the embassy's 11,000-person staff, for example, and typically drive around in heavily armored military vehicles.

When embassy personnel move throughout the country, small helicopters buzz over the convoys to provide support in case of an attack. Often, two contractors armed with machine guns are tethered to the outside of the helicopters.

Let's see: if you had thousands of armed foreigners prowling your streets in heavily armoured -- and heavily armed -- military vehicles, and your skies were filled with foreign helicopters sporting machine-gunners and all-seeing foreign robot drones watching your every move, would you say you had a "sovereign" country? Would you say were no longer under the heel of an armed occupying power?

The ever-circumspect Times calls this heavy-handed aggression "yet another tricky issue for the two countries." It seems that "many Iraqis" remain "deeply skeptical of the United States" -- though Lord knows why. A million innocent dead, millions more displaced, millions more ruined, sectarian violence and government torture set loose on the land -- why would you be "skeptical" of the folks who brought you *that*?

But of course, those little brown silly-billies are worrying themselves over nothing. Why, these diplomatic drones aren't even armed! How do we know this? Because the State Department says so:

The State Department drones, by contrast, carry no weapons and are meant to provide data and images of possible hazards, like public protests or roadblocks, to security personnel on the ground, American officials said. They are much smaller than armed drones, with wingspans as short as 18 inches, compared with 55 feet for the Predators.

The State Department has about two dozen drones in Iraq, but many are used only for spare parts, the officials said.

All very comforting -- but try reading that passage using our patented Newspeak Detangler Technique; i.e., at the end of every quoted assertion by a government official, in any story, on any subject, always add this little phrase: "but they could be lying."