Rendon Group

From Powerbase

[Rendon Group is a US PR firm that specializes in 'perception management'. It was famously recruited by the CIA on a cost-plus contract to foment regime change in Iraq. It is also responsible for the creation of the Iraqi National Congress.

In September 2001, the Pentagon had secretly awarded Rendon a $16 million contract to target Iraq and other adversaries with propaganda. According to a Rolling Stone investigation, the Rendon Group was, authorized "to research and analyze information classified up to Top Secret/SCI/SI/TG/G/HCS" -- an extraordinarily high level of clearance granted to only a handful of defense contractors. "SCI" stands for Sensitive Compartmented Information, data classified higher than Top Secret. "SI" is Special Intelligence, very secret communications intercepted by the National Security Agency. "TG" refers to Talent/Keyhole, code names for imagery from reconnaissance aircraft and spy satellites. "G" stands for Gamma (communications intercepts from extremely sensitive sources) and "HCS" means Humint Control System (information from a very sensitive human source). Taken together, the acronyms indicate that Rendon enjoys access to the most secret information from all three forms of intelligence collection: eavesdropping, imaging satellites and human spies.

Its founder, John Rendon boasts, "We've worked in ninety-one countries...Going all the way back to Panama, we've been involved in every war, with the exception of Somalia."

Between 2000 and 2004, Pentagon documents show, the Rendon Group received at least thirty-five contracts with the Defense Department, worth a total of $50 million to $100 million.

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Regime Change in Iraq

In '91 the Rendon Group received a cost-plus contract (costs + 10 percent commission) to foment regime change in Iraq. The group assisted the CIA in bypassing domestic restrictions against propagandizing the US public by placing mots of its stories in the British press. Many of the stories passed to a list of pliable British journalists subsequently appeared in the London press from which they were often picked up by the US press. "Occasionally", Francis Brooke told Jane Mayer of the New Yorker, "the company would be reprimanded by project managers in Washington when too many of those stories were picked up by the American press, thereby transgressing laws that prohibited domestic propaganda." Mostly, however, he said it worked "like magic."

In addition to the propaganda, the Rendon Group was tasked with creating a viable and unified opposition movement against Saddam. Thus was born the INC, soon to be headed by Ahmad Chalabi despite having failed to qualify even for qualify for a seat on the fifteen-member board in one of its first organization meetings in Vienna in
June, 1992. With US government assistance, Chalabi soon had his conviction over a major banking fraud in a Jordanian court dropped to reinvent himself as a political leader and a champion of liberal democratic values.

Rendon's postwar work involved producing videos and radio skits ridiculing Hussein, a traveling photo exhibit of Iraqi atrocities, and radio scripts calling on Iraqi army officers to defect. ClandestineRadio.com (http://www.clandestineradio.com), a website that monitors underground and anti-government radio stations in countries throughout the world, also 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.\[1\] 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.\[2\]

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. According to ABC, Rendon came up with the name for the Iraqi National Congress, an opposition coalition of 19 Iraqi and Kurdish organizations whose main tasks were to "gather information, distribute propaganda and recruit dissidents." ABC also reported that the INC received $12 million of covert CIA funding between 1992 and 1996.\[3\]

### Principals

- John Rendon
- Francis Brooke
- Sandra Libby - Rendon's wife and chief financial officer and senior communications strategist.
- Rick Rendon - Rendon's brother; Senior partner and runs the company's Boston office, "producing public-service announcements for the Whale Conservation Institute and coordinating Empower Peace."

### Resources

- Rendon Group - Vieques Campaign

### Related Articles

- James Bamford, The Man Who Sold The War (http://www.rollingstone.com/politics/story/8798997/the_man_who_sold_the_war/print), Rolling Stone, November 17, 2005

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