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## Inquiry Finds U.S. Official Set Up Spy Ring in Asia

By MARK MAZZETTI  
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A senior Pentagon official broke Defense Department rules and “deliberately misled” senior generals when he set up a network of private contractors to spy in Afghanistan and Pakistan beginning last year, according to the results of an internal government investigation.

The Pentagon investigation concluded that the official, Michael D. Furlong, set up an “unauthorized” intelligence network to collect information in both countries — some of which was fed to senior generals and used for strikes against militant groups — while masking the entire operation as a more benign information operations campaign.

The inquiry concluded that “further investigation is warranted of the misleading and incorrect statements the individual made” about the legality of the program, according to Col. David Lapan, a Pentagon spokesman.

Reached by telephone on Thursday, Mr. Furlong was angry about the conclusions of the investigation, saying that nobody from the Defense Department ever interviewed him as part of the inquiry.

“This is a lot like kangaroo court justice,” Mr. Furlong said.

He said that his work had been approved by a number of senior military officers in Afghanistan, and that he had never misled anyone about what he was doing.

“They only talked to one side, and those are the people running for cover,” he said.

Defense Secretary [Robert M. Gates](#) ordered the investigation after The New York Times reported on the existence of the network in March. The inquiry was carried out by Michael Decker, a top aide to Mr. Gates for intelligence issues.

The results of the Pentagon investigation are classified, and Defense Department officials gave few specifics about the accusations.

Mr. Furlong, a senior Air Force civilian official, has been barred from his office in San Antonio for several months. The Air Force inspector general is conducting a separate investigation into the matter, to determine whether Mr. Furlong broke any laws or committed contract fraud.

Pentagon rules forbid the hiring of contractors as spies. Military officials said that when Gen. [David H. Petraeus](#), then the top commander in the region, signed off on Mr. Furlong’s operation in January 2009, there were specific prohibitions against intelligence-gathering, including hiring agents to provide information about enemy positions in Pakistan.

The contractors were supposed to provide only broad information about the political and tribal dynamics in the region — called “atmospherics” — and “force protection” information that might protect American troops from attack, the officials said.

But some Pentagon officials said that over time the operation appeared to transition into traditional spying activities.

Mr. Furlong’s network, composed of a group of small companies that used agents deep inside Afghanistan and Pakistan to collect intelligence on militant groups, operated under a \$22 million contract run by Lockheed Martin.

One of the companies used a group of American, Afghan and Pakistani agents overseen by Duane Clarridge, a [Central Intelligence Agency](#) veteran best known for his role in the Iran-contra scandal. Mr. Clarridge declined to be interviewed.

Officials said that the contractors delivered their intelligence reports via “Hushmail,” an encrypted e-mail service, to an “information operations fusion cell” at a military base at Kabul International Airport. There, the reports were put into classified military computer networks and used either for future military operations or intelligence reports.

The contractors continued their work for weeks after Mr. Gates ordered the investigation, sending dozens of reports to the fusion center. The Pentagon finally let the contract lapse at the end of May.

Colonel Lapan said the investigation concluded that Pentagon rules governing intelligence operations needed to be more clearly defined and that “better coordination and de-confliction of both intelligence and information operations is required by staffs at all levels.”