

(b)(6)

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From: (b)(6)
Sent: Friday, August 14, 2009 8:01 AM
To: (b)(6)
Subject: RE: Rendon Group

Thanks, (b)(6)

-----Original Message-----

From: (b)(6)
(b)(6)
Sent: Thursday, August 13, 2009 6:37 PM
To: (b)(6)
Cc: (b)(6)@hks.harvard.edu
Subject: Re: Rendon Group

Gentlemen,

I don't check AKO as frequently as I should. Please feel free to use both my personal email and my office one - both are cc'd - for follow-up.

Here are my responses:

1. How long has the DoD employed The Rendon Group for media assessments? My response pertains only to Afghanistan - Rendon has had many contracts with DoD over the span of many years and conflicts.

I understand that the first contract was let about 8 years ago. During September 2007 (82nd's rotation prior to our assumption of authority in April 08), that original contract expired. The 82nd and CENTCOM opted to roll the media requirements for contracted support under the larger umbrella of an existing Rendon contract at CENTCOM (administered by IO). When we (the 101st) took over in April 08, we opted to maintain this arrangement until that contract ended and we made the decision to open the contract for bid. The contract expired in the summer (I'm sorry but cannot remember dates) and we followed contracting requirements and posted it for bid. Rendon was the only company to enter a bid. That contract was let for a one year period, thus, it should be expiring soon. When USFOR-A came into existence (September 08), we transferred the contract and responsibility to administer it to USFOR-A Public Affairs. The reason for the transfer was because the products were being used by all US entities through-out Afghanistan; therefore, it was deemed to be a National Support Element responsibility.

2. What data does The Rendon Group use to calculate the assessments? They use a variety of open sources as well as proprietary systems to derive a variety of media assessment products.

3. How many journalists have been assessed? I don't have the figure.

4. Is every journalist who requests an embed in Iraq and Afghanistan assessed? I cannot speak for Iraq. We used the information for all reporters requesting to embed with our units as part of the credentialing process and to understand the reporters' angles and reporting styles. In no case were journalists who was contracted or staff with a media organization denied an embed solely based upon Rendon products.

Embeds were not considered a requirement but a request on the part of the media with an agreement by the embedding unit to host/support the individual. Embed requests were typically accepted. Those that were rejected were most often denied because of limited ability to support (we then asked the requestor to change dates or locations); a negative experience/relationship between the reporter and commander on the ground; and, though rare, because the reporter misrepresented themselves or had done something suggesting that they were a risk to themselves and/or the unit (one reporter insisted on flying a private plane to embed locations - a few broke ground rules in Iraq with other DoD organizations).

At NO TIME were responses to queries withheld from any reporter. Rendon assessments were not obtained for every reporter with whom we interacted. On every query, we met the DoD principles of information and regulations by responding to and providing the fullest disclosure possible within the limits of security.

Embeds were viewed as a privilege, not an obligation. However, it was our commander's intent to allow all that we could reasonably accommodate to the level that the tactical commander could handle. We highly encouraged embeds with US, international, and local reporters in as wide a representation of markets as possible (everything from magazines, bloggers, print, radio, broadcast, non-fiction authors, film makers, etc.).

5. How are these assessments used by commanders, public affairs, etc? At the CJTF level the assessments were used to make certain that we were matching the reporters expectations with the available units/opportunities. Many times the reporter's past work indicated an familiarity with a particular aspect of the effort and we would offer missions for which they already had an understanding of. An example would be a reporter who had covered development aspects of Iraq but who asked for an area or unit that could not demonstrate that particular effort may be asked if they want to change locations/units to see how the efforts in Afghanistan are proceeding.

6. Why was this assessment system implemented? When considering dozens of requests, typically for the same geographical location and unit (trend was that every reporter wanted to go to the Korengal), we would have to have some means to place context on the requests and to prioritize. We could not simply take a "first come, first serve" approach. Many organizations can afford to have multiple reporters at once while others had but one opportunity. I, as the director, would have to make subjective calls.

7. Is it an annual contract? How much is the contact worth? It is. |

don't know what the final amount was.

Hope this is helpful.

(b)(6)

----- Original Message -----

From: (b)(6)

Date: Thursday, August 13, 2009 15:46

Subject: Rendon Group

To: (b)(6)

Cc:

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> LTC,

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> OSD has received an inquiry regarding media analysis conducted by

> the Rendon

> Group and I was told that you might know something about this topic.

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> If possible, could you contact (b)(6) at OSD a (b)(6)

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> Thanks,

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(b)(6)

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> P.S. Congratulation on your fellowship at Harvard.