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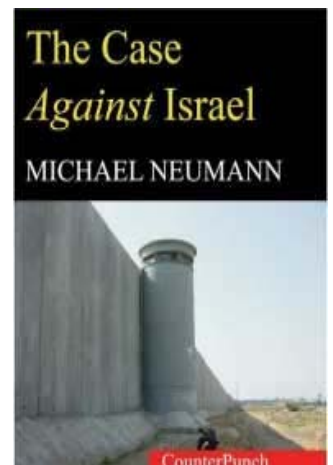
The Secret World of Stephen Cambone

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Rumsfeld's Enforcer

By JEFFREY ST. CLAIR



February 6, 2006

Christopher

The grave fellow in the business suit sitting between two uniformed generals at the

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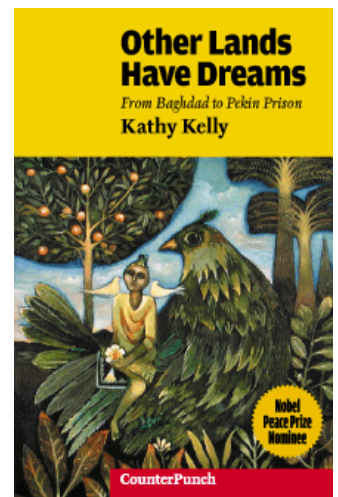
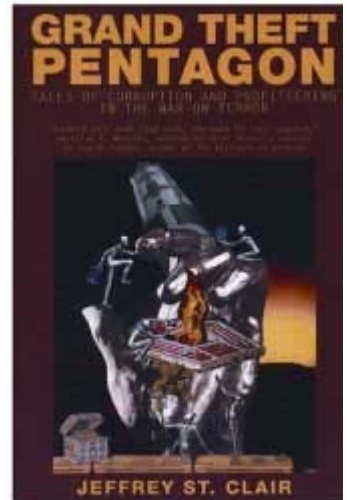
[James Petras](#)

witness table during the senate hearings about the abuse of Iraqi prisoners of war at Abu Ghraib was Dr. Stephen Cambone, the undersecretary of defense for intelligence, known throughout the Pentagon as Donald Rumsfeld's "chief henchman". In his testimony before the committee, Cambone was unapologetic and almost as dismissive as the ridiculous Sen. James Inhofe about the global disgust which erupted over the abuse and murder of Iraqi prisoners of war. Cambone, an apex neo-con and veteran of the Project for the New American Century, evinced disdain not only for the senatorial inquiry but also at a squeamish Lieutenant General Antonio Taguba, who sat next him, looking as if he suspected that he might well be the next one leashed to Cambone's bureaucratic pillory.

A Republican staffer on the Senate foreign relations Committee tells CounterPunch the little-known Cambone, who like so many others on the Bush war team skillfully avoided military service, has quietly become one of the most powerful men in the Pentagon, rivaling even Paul Wolfowitz. "Cambone is a truly dangerous player", the staffer said. "He is Rumsfeld's guard dog, implacably loyal. While Wolfowitz positions himself to step into the top spot should Rumsfeld get axed, Cambone has dug in and gone to war against the insurgents in the Pentagon. Cambone's fingerprints are all

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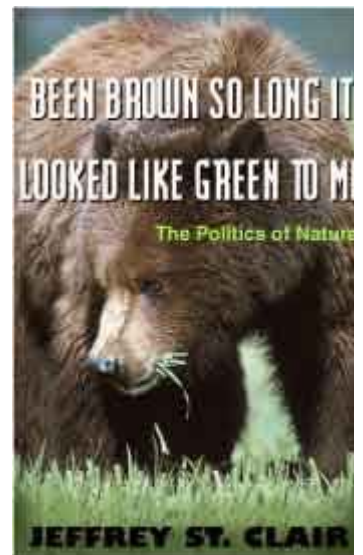
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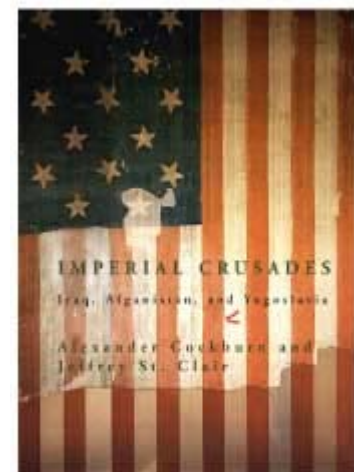
over the occupation and the interrogation scandal. For him, there's no turning back".

Cambone has stealthily positioned himself as the most powerful intelligence operator in the Bush administration. On May 8, 2003, Rumsfeld named him Undersecretary of Defense for Intelligence, a new position which Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz described thus: "The new office is in charge of all intelligence and intelligence-related oversight and policy guidance functions". In practice, this means that Cambone controls the Defense Intelligence Agency, the National Imagery and Mapping Agency, the National Reconnaissance Organization, the National Security Agency, the Defense Security Service and Pentagon's Counter-Intelligence Field Activity. Cambone meets with the heads of these agencies, as well as top officials at the CIA and National Security Council twice a week to give them their marching orders.

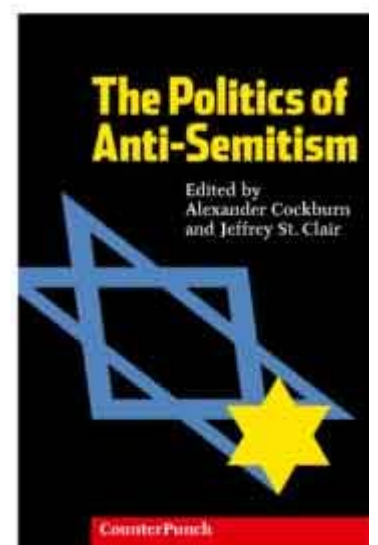
One senate staffer tells us he has more operational sway than George Tenet or Condi Rice. His rise to power has been quiet, almost unnoticed until the Abu Ghraib scandal forced him briefly into the spotlight. Indeed, prior to the events of May, Cambone completely evaded detection by Bob Woodward, who in two thick volumes on Bush's wars failed to mention the name Cambone once. Of course, this may reveal



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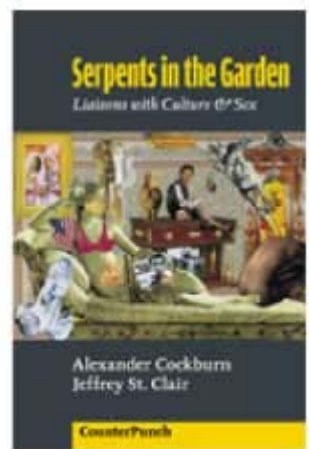
more about Woodward than Cambone's skill at bureaucratic camouflage.

Yes, Cambone has neo-con credentials. He got his masters and doctorate at Claremont College in southern California, an elite Straussian enclave. He went on to draft sections of the Project for a New American Century's 2001 Report, *Rebuilding America's Defenses*, a document notable for recommending that the US develop ethnic and race-based weapons. But more crucial for the speedy trajectory of his career is Cambone's resume as a devout Rumsfeldian. In 1998, Rumsfeld selected Cambone to serve as staff director of the Rumsfeld Commission on Ballistic Missile Defense, the Congressionally-appointed panel which justified implementation of the Strategic Defense Initiative on the grounds that the US was vulnerable to strikes from missiles freighting nuclear, chemical and biological weapons launched by rogue nations, such as North Korea, Iran and Iraq.

Cambone was no newcomer to the Star Wars scheme. From 1982 through 1986, he toiled at Los Alamos developing policy papers about the need for space-based weapons. In 1990, George Bush, Sr. picked Cambone to head up the Strategic Defense Initiative Office at the Pentagon. After Bush lost, Cambone migrated to the Center for Strategic and International Studies, a DC holding pen for



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Eva Golinger

hawks, where he continued to hammer away in essays and speeches about the windows of vulnerability in the skies over America.

Rumsfeld first brought Cambone into his inner circle not as an overlord for intelligence, but as the chief Pentagon strategist for pushing SDI through Congress. Recall that in the early days of the Bush administration, Star Wars and the obliteration of the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty were the twin obsessions of the Rumsfeld gang at the Pentagon.

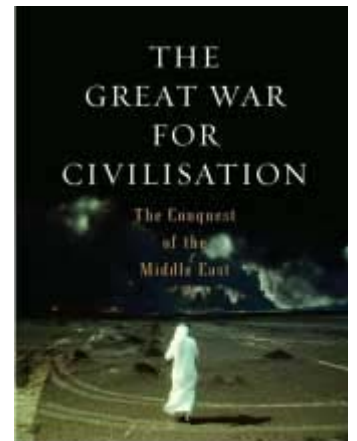


After 9/11 Rumsfeld moved Cambone over to work on war planning and intelligence as Deputy Secretary of Defense for Policy, where he labored under the neo-con luminary Douglas Feith. There's reason to believe that Cambone's real mission was to keep tabs on Feith, a notorious hothead and Cheney loyalist whom Rumsfeld distrusts. Rumsfeld wasn't the only one who loathed Feith. Gen. Tommy Franks, who commanded the Afghan and Iraq wars, told Woodward that Feith was "the stupidest motherfucker on the face of the Earth".

Cambone and Feith reportedly soon developed an equally acrimonious relationship. But as



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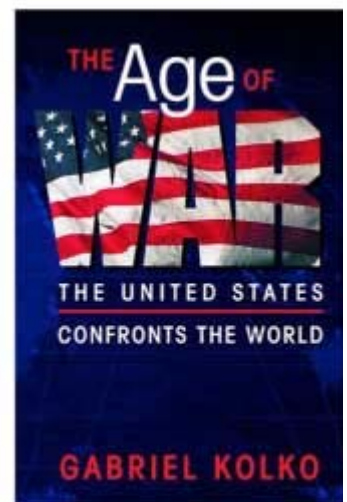
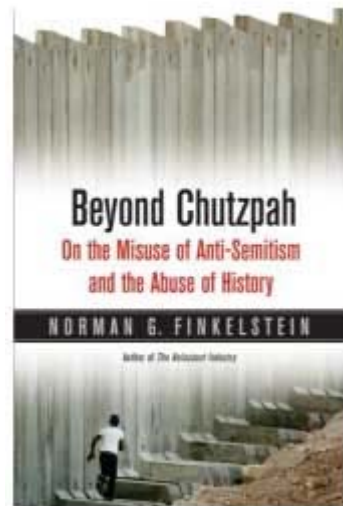
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Feith's star fell, Cambone's rose. In July 2002, Rumsfeld moved Cambone to the Office of Analysis and Evaluation, where his mission was to implement Rumsfeld's plan to reorganize the military and trim some of its most highly-prized weapons systems. "Cambone loomed as a huge threat to the generals", a senate staffer told us. "The message was pretty simple. Go along with our war plans or risk losing your big-ticket items and perhaps your command. Cambone was the enforcer". At the Pentagon, the most feared weapon isn't a dirty nuke, but a line item in the budget.

In April of 2003, Rumsfeld placed Cambone in charge of counter-terrorism teams operating under the code-name "Grey Fox". This covert operation is a kind of sabotage and assassination squad run out of the civil wing of the Pentagon. Rumsfeld had grown frustrated with the military's reluctance to assassinate suspected al-Qaeda and Iraqi resistance leaders, an understandable reluctance in light of US executive orders restricting the use of assassinations. So Rumsfeld seized control of the hit teams from the generals and assigned it to Cambone, a civilian appointee with no military experience. The Gray Fox project, so one Washington Post report concluded, is geared to perform "deep penetration" missions in Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iran, Syria and North Korea, setting up



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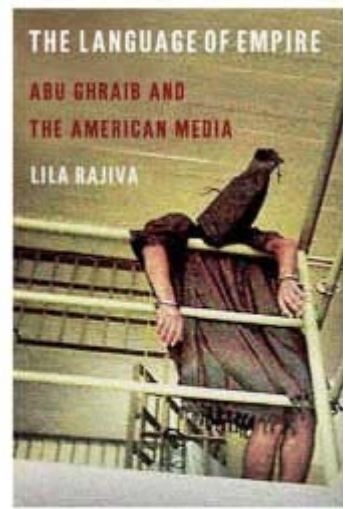
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listening posts, conducting acts of sabotage and assassination. When questioned about Gray Fox, Cambone snapped, "We won't talk about those things".

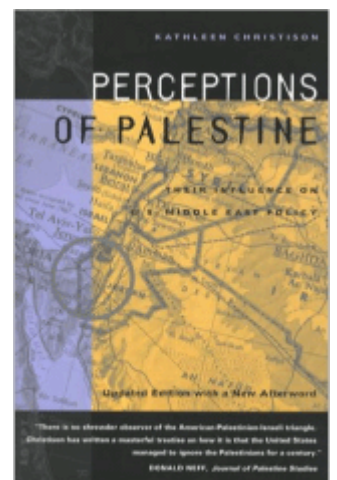
However, military officers did talk about Gray Fox. "The people in these units are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, anywhere around the world. They are very highly trained, with specialized skills for dealing with close-quarters combat and unique situations posed by weapons of mass destruction", a military officer told Army Times. "If we find a high-value target somewhere, anywhere in the world, and if we have the forces to get there and get to them, we should get there and get to them", the official said. "Right now, there are 18 food chains, 20 levels of paperwork and 22 hoops we have to jump through before we can take action. Our enemy moves faster than that".

Aside from guarding Rumsfeld from assaults from within the Pentagon, Cambone's main role seems to be cutting through red tape and bothersome codes of conduct, such as the Geneva Conventions, to institute legally questionable policies. Take the treatment of Iraqi prisoners. The orders to soften up Iraqi prisoners for intelligence interrogators (both military and private contractors) came directly from Cambone's office.

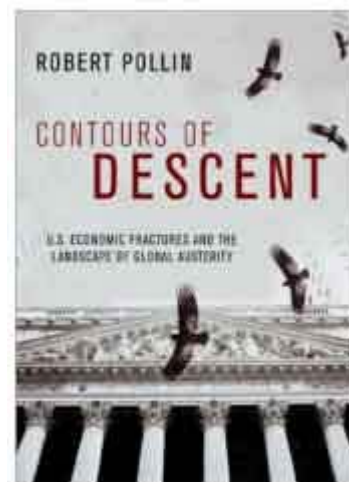
In August 2003, as the occupation of Iraq began to turn



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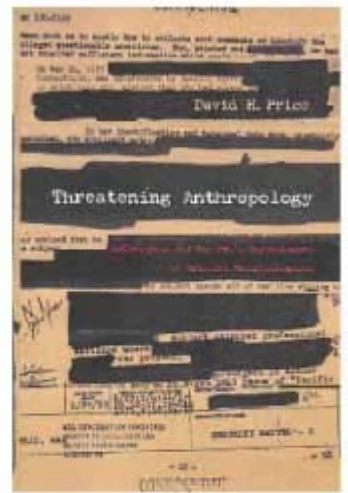
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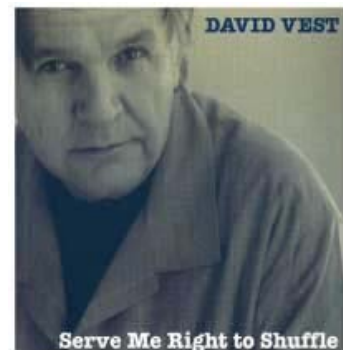
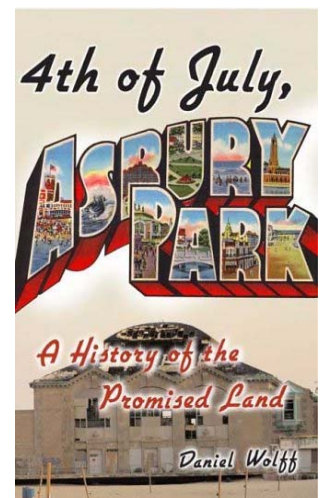
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bloody, Cambone ordered Brigadier General Geoffrey Miller, former commander of the detention facility at Guantanamo, to go to Iraq along with a team of experienced military interrogators, who had honed their inquisitorial skills with the torture of al-Qaeda and Taliban detainees captured in Afghanistan. His instructions were to "Gitmoize" the interrogations at Abu Ghraib and other prisons, including the notorious Camp Cropper on the outskirts of the Baghdad Airport, where the Delta Force conducted abusive interrogations of top level members of Saddam's regime.

Cambone's top deputy inside the military is none other than Lt. General William Boykin, the Christian warrior, whom Cambone and Rumsfeld elevated to the position of intelligence czar for the US Army last fall. Boykin rose to this lofty eminence after he went on a revival tour of evangelical churches in Oregon, where he disclosed the top secret intelligence that the US "had been attacked because we are a Christian nation". Boykin also leaked the news that Bush's war on terrorism was actually "a war against Satan". Boykin calmed the congregations by saying there was little reason to fear because the Christian god is mightier than Allah. "I know that my god is bigger than his", Boykin preached. "I know that my god is a real God and his an



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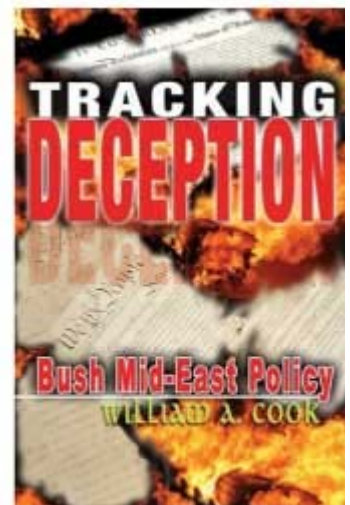
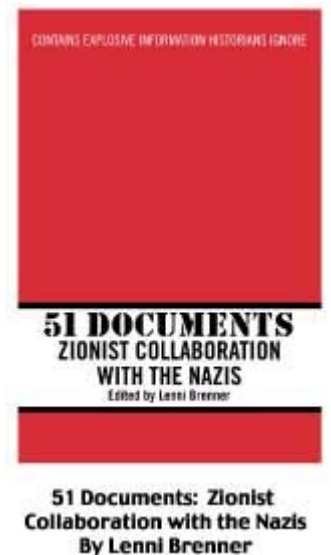
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idol". The general also revealed to the faithful that the supreme deity of the Christians had hand-picked Bush to be president during these fraught times. It was obvious, the general reasoned, that Bush didn't win the election. He became president through a kind of preemptive strike by the Almighty.

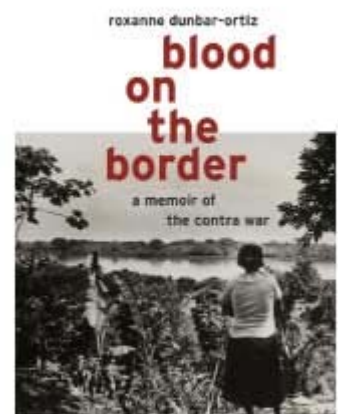
When word of Boykin's sermons landed on the front page of the Los Angeles Times in October of 2003, there was outrage in the American Islamic community that this two-star zealot was now directing US military intelligence operations in the Middle East. There were calls for his ouster and the Inspector General of the Army launched an investigation of Boykin. But Rumsfeld and Cambone shrugged off the probe and stood by Boykin.

It now turns out that Boykin, the Islamophobe, played a central role in the torture scandal now gripping the Bush administration. Last summer, Boykin briefed Cambone on a list of no-holds-barred interrogation methods that he thought should be used to extract more information from Iraqi detainees.

These included humiliation, sleep deprivation, restraint, water torture, religious taunting, light deprivation, and other techniques of torture that have since come to light. A few weeks after this crucial meeting in June, Cambone sent General Miller to



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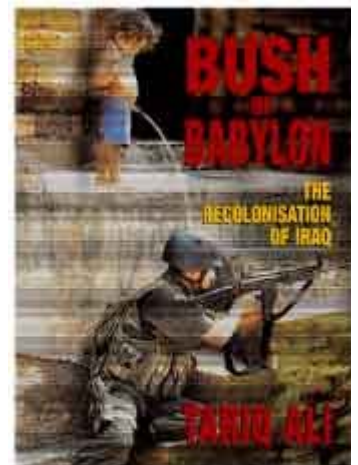
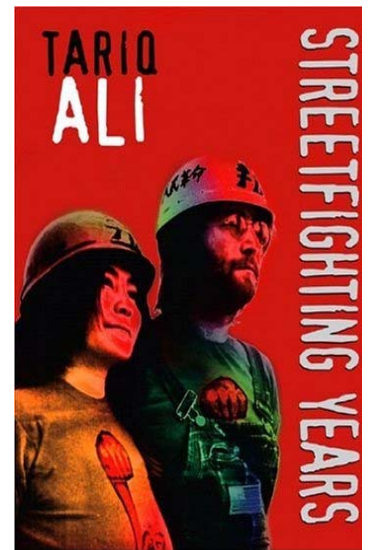
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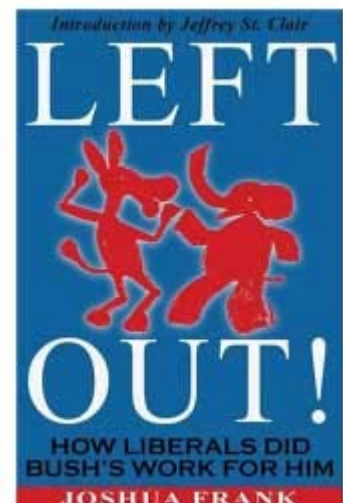
Iraq with instructions to oversee the implementation of the Boykin interrogation plan in order to "rapidly exploit internees for actionable intelligence". According to Lt. General Antonio Taguba, who investigated the abuses at Abu Ghraib, Miller then instructed the Military Police to become "actively engaged in setting the conditions for successful exploitation of internees". The grim trio of Cambone, Boykin and Miller also conspired to put the control of the detention facilities in Iraq under the tactical control of military intelligence. At Abu Ghraib, the job fell to Col. Thomas M. Pappas, commander of the 205th Military Intelligence Brigade, a move that Lt. General Taguba called contrary to established military doctrine.

It now seems likely that Cambone was only the one to invite Israeli advice (and perhaps interrogators) on how to extract information from Iraqi detainees. Before the Abu Ghraib scandal broke, Cambone freely admitted to the Washington Times that he was taking advice from the Israelis and sharing intelligence with them on the mechanics of occupation and interrogation. "Those who have to deal with like problems tend to share information as best they can".

These days advancement through the ranks of the Pentagon often goes hand-in-hand with opportunities to deliver sweetheart deals to



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The Recolonization of Iraq
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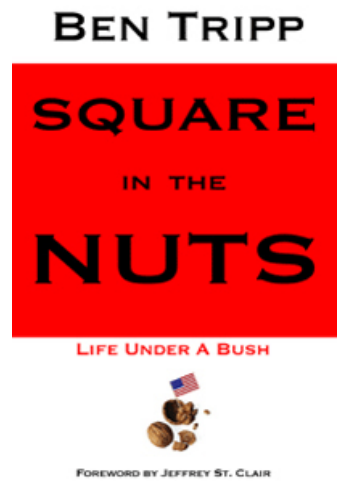
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corporate allies. Here too Cambone has not disappointed his backers. From 1986 to 1990, Cambone worked as a top lobbyist for SRS, a murky software company with deep roots in the Pentagon and CIA. Although Cambone left SRS for government work, he didn't forget his old employers. With Cambone's approval, the Pentagon awarded SRS a \$6 million contract to provide management support for the Missile Defense Agency, the wing of the Defense Department charged with managing the SDI program and the development of space-base weapons.

In addition, SRS benefited from Cambone's transfer to the spying wing of the Pentagon. An SRS subsidiary called Torch Concepts was hired by the Pentagon to conduct a data mining foray into passenger records of JetBlue airlines. Bart Edsall, SRS's vice-president, described the work Torch did this way: "the company got a contract from the Pentagon to work with the Army to ferret information out of data streams [in an effort to detect] abnormal behavior of secretive people". Sound familiar? It should. The scheme was essentially a privatized version of the kind of work that John Poindexter wanted to conduct with his discredited Total Information Awareness operation. No surprise that the contracts for this outsourced form of snooping should fall to SRS. It is already the primary



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private contractor working with the Information Awareness Office of DARPA, the agency which Poindexter ruled and which continues the nefarious work of prying into the private lives, including travel, health and financial records, of American citizens.

As Rumsfeld's hatchetman, Cambone has become so hated and feared inside the Pentagon that one general told the Army Times: "If I had one round left in my revolver, I'd take out Stephen Cambone". This raises the concept of fragging to an entirely new level.

This essay is excerpted from Jeffrey St. Clair's new book, [Grand Theft Pentagon](#).



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