



Written by [Thomas R. Eddlem](#) on December 4, 2012

DIA Doubles Spy Numbers Abroad, Rivaling CIA Numbers

The U.S. Defense Intelligence Agency is gearing up for an unprecedented growth in the number of its field agents, according to a December 2 [story](#) in the *Washington Post*. The growth follows a pattern of similar surges for other major U.S. intelligence agencies, the NSA and the CIA, since 2001.

“The DIA overhaul,” the *Post* [explained](#), “combined with the growth of the CIA since the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks — will create a spy network of unprecedented size. The plan reflects the Obama administration’s affinity for espionage and covert action over conventional force.”



The purpose of gearing up the DIA staff may be to better target drone strikes around the world, [according to](#) the *Post*: “The DIA has long played a major role in assessing and identifying targets for the U.S. military, which in recent years has assembled a constellation of drone bases stretching from Afghanistan to East Africa.” The establishment Washington newspaper has noted that this increase in agents is genuinely noteworthy, despite the official talk of budget-tightening in Washington. “This is not a marginal adjustment for DIA,” the agency’s director, Lt. Gen. Michael T. Flynn, [told](#) the *Post* at a recent conference, during which he outlined the changes but did not describe them in detail. “This is a major adjustment for national security.” Flynn predicted an “era of persistent conflict” globally in which the DIA is needed for providing on-the-ground intelligence, possibly for military strikes.

So why is the Obama administration gearing up the DIA instead of the Central Intelligence Agency? The *Washington Post* [seems to think](#) it’s because the DIA is less subject to day-to-day congressional oversight than the CIA. The *Post* suggested:

The expansion of the agency’s clandestine role is likely to heighten concerns that it will be accompanied by an escalation in lethal strikes and other operations outside public view. Because of differences in legal authorities, the military isn’t subject to the same congressional notification requirements as the CIA, leading to potential oversight gaps.

The DIA now has 17,000 employees, still smaller than the NSA (which manages electronic surveillance and which already [tracks without warrants](#) every American’s [telephone](#) and [Internet traffic](#) in [huge data centers](#)), and smaller than the CIA (which generally manages foreign field intelligence). It is about half the size of the FBI, which is charged mostly with domestic surveillance and law enforcement, an agency that nonetheless has [branch offices in scores of foreign countries](#).

An abundance of intelligence agencies charged with spying on citizens of their own government has long been a mark of totalitarian regimes the world over. The communist-era Soviet Union had the twin spy agencies in the KGB (State Security Service) and the MVD (Military Intelligence). Nazi Germany had three spy agencies: the *Gestapo* (German State Police), *Schutzstaffel* (Protection Squadron, or SS), and the *Sturmabteilung* (Stormtroopers, or SA).



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The question taxpayers and freedom-loving Americans need to ask is: Does America really need such an enormous and costly spy apparatus to keep the nation safe from several hundred potential terrorists spread throughout the world? And do agencies such as the NSA really need to expend billions of tax dollars in computer equipment and staff-hours spying on law-abiding Americans in order to catch foreign terrorist suspects?



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