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A major new investigation by The Intercept says the Trump administration is weighing plans to create a global network of private spies who would report directly to the White House and CIA Director Mike Pompeo.

According to the investigation, the proposal was developed by Erik Prince, founder of the now-defunct private mercenary firm Blackwater, and Oliver North, a Marine lieutenant colonel who oversaw the Reagan administration's covert operation to divert money from secret arms sales to Iran to right-wing death squads in Nicaragua, a scheme now known as the Iran-Contra scandal.

The Intercept reports Prince and North have pitched the private network of spies as a way for the White House to counter members of the intelligence community, or the so-called deep state, who Trump claims are subverting his presidency. The Intercept also reports the White House is considering another proposal to create a new global kidnapping and rendition program.

Erik Prince advised President Trump's transition team. He is also the brother of Education Secretary Betsy DeVos. After Trump took office, Prince publicly pitched a plan to privatize the U.S. war in Afghanistan. Another member of Trump's transition team, CIA veteran John Maguire, is also reportedly working with Prince on the private spies and global rendition plan.

The Intercept reports Prince may have foreshadowed his new proposal in a 2016 interview on former White House chief strategist Steve Bannon's radio program, in which Prince proposed reviving a version of the CIA's Vietnam War assassination scheme, known as the Phoenix Program.

**Erik Prince:** "Two: a Phoenix-like program. OK, remember the Phoenix Program was a root canal done to the Viet Cong during the Vietnam War. It was a kill—"

**Stephen Bannon:** "You mean, this is the Phoenix Program—this is the Phoenix—hang on. This is the Phoenix Program in Vietnam."

**Erik Prince:** "It was a vicious, but very effective, kill-capture program in Vietnam that destroyed the Viet Cong as a military force. That's what needs to be done to the funders of Islamic terror, and that would even the wealthy radical Islamist billionaires funding it from the Middle East, and any of the other illicit activities therein."

That was Erik Prince, speaking on Steve Bannon's radio program last year. The White House, the CIA and Erik Prince have all rejected The Intercept's exposé. This is White House Press

Secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders responding to questions Tuesday.

**Reporter:** “Sarah, one issue that you may have seen this morning: Is the White House or the president, at any level, considering creating a global or regional spy network that would circumvent the U.S. intelligence apparatus to serve the president outside of the normal and legally defined intelligence-gathering mechanisms?”

**Press Secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders:** “I’m not aware of any plans for something of that definition or anything similar to that at this time. ... I’m not going to answer every hypothetical for every single member. Did some random person off the street come in and say something? I don’t know what you’re—”

**Reporter:** “So is it possible this is something the president might consider?”

**Press Secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders:** “Sorry?”

**Reporter:** “Is it something the president might consider?”

**Press Secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders:** “Again, I haven’t asked him, but it’s not something that’s currently in the works.”