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THE EXECUTIVE

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

Hunter asks for probe of Pentagon actions against whistle-blower

By [Roxana Tiron](#)

House Armed Services Chairman Duncan Hunter (R-Calif.) has asked the Pentagon's inspector general to investigate why the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) revoked the top security clearance of a whistle-blower involved in a classified intelligence cell that may have identified the Sept. 11 terrorists a year before the attacks.

Army Reserve Lt. Col. Anthony Shaffer, who has said that a military unit called Able Danger identified four Sept. 11 hijackers before the 2001 attacks, is facing Pentagon accusations that he broke military rules.

None of the charges — which range from misuse of government property to flashing military identification while intoxicated — are related to his claims about Able Danger. His clearance, however, was revoked a day before he was supposed to testify in front of the Senate Judiciary Committee on the intelligence cell's findings.

Hunter's request for an independent investigation into why Shaffer's clearance was revoked is the latest development in a larger battle that Rep. Curt Weldon (R-Pa.), vice chairman of the House Armed Services Committee, has been waging against the DIA for months. Weldon has accused the agency of trying to put a lid on the information the intelligence unit uncovered.

Weldon says that the DIA stifled crucial information about Mohammed Atta, who became the lead Sept. 11 terrorist, and then destroyed related documents. He also says that the Sept. 11 commission appointed to look into the attacks turned disregarded



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information it received from Able Danger members.

Weldon has said he learned that a secret program known as Able Danger was put in place in 1999 and 2000 by the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and by the general in charge of the Special Forces Command. It was devoted to uncovering key cells of al Qaeda globally, giving the military the capability to destroy those cells.

Weldon told The Hill that he believes the DIA, a unit of the Pentagon, is carrying out a smear campaign against an officer who spoke the truth.

He said Able Danger tried to inform the FBI about its findings in September 2000, but members of the unit were denied admittance. In addition, Weldon said that Shaffer, while stationed in Afghanistan, briefed the Sept. 11 commission staff, which at that point was conducting interviews abroad.

He said that the Shaffer story has larger ramifications — that what the DIA is doing to Shaffer it could do to any other member of the military.

“I do not want to serve in a Congress if that is what it comes to,” he said. “We talk the good talk. ... We talk about how much we support the troops. Here is the time to test: If you support the troops, you will not allow a bureaucracy to ruin someone who has done nothing wrong but tell the truth.”

Weldon said he was cautioned by some of his colleagues that his investigation into the matter may embarrass the Bush administration.

“If there are people in this administration or the previous administration who do not want this story to be told, and obviously there are, then that’s all the more reason why the Congress has got to demand that the truth has to come out,” he said.

In a letter to Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld dated Oct. 20, Hunter said there are several inconsistencies between the information provided by the DIA about its decision to revoke Shaffer’s clearance and Shaffer’s version of the story.

Hunter wrote that the House Armed Services Committee has been reviewing issues concerning Able Danger, specifically allegations that Shaffer’s security clearance had been revoked “possibly in retaliation for his having spoken to the 9/11 Commission staff about Able Danger.”



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“The Committee has taken these allegations seriously and with assistance from your staff has conducted both an internal review of documents provided by the Department of Defense and informal interviews with persons associated with these allegations,” Hunter wrote in the letter obtained by The Hill.

He said that the committee’s investigations had turned up inconsistencies and that the committee “also has concerns with certain aspects of how the DIA handled this matter.”

Hunter is asking the Pentagon to stop any further action to revoke Shaffer’s clearance or to terminate his employment with the DIA until the inspector general’s office conducts its own review. Hunter is also asking for a copy of that review once it is completed.

Hunter is one of the few members of Congress who have spoken up on at least on one facet of this complex issue.

Weldon said he is planning to brief all members of Congress on Able Danger and the campaign to ruin Shaffer’s reputation.

“Most members are not aware of this story,” he said. “It is a very detailed story.”

Weldon also said he plans to ask Homeland Security Chairman Peter King (R-N.Y.) to refer the issue to the newly created Subcommittee on Investigations.

King told The Hill that he will look into the issue if Weldon asks him to do so but that he doesn’t think the Homeland Security Committee has jurisdiction over the matter.

“Curt is raising very good questions, and he deserves the credit of bringing this up,” King said. “The problem with Homeland Security doing it ... it is more of an armed-forces issue.” He added that the Homeland Security Committee was not in existence in 2000.

“It has to be investigated somewhere,” he added.

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