



Reuters

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## **ISIS Intel Was Cooked, House Panel Finds**

A leading U.S. general pressured his intelligence analysts into playing down the ISIS and al Qaeda threats, according to a congressional task force.

A House Republican task force has found that officials from the U.S. military's Central Command altered intelligence reports to [portray the U.S. fight against ISIS and al Qaeda in a more positive light](#) than lower-level analysts believed was warranted by the facts on the ground, three officials familiar with the task force's findings told The Daily Beast.

A roughly 10-page report on the controversy is expected to be released by the end of next week, two officials said. While it contains no definitive evidence that senior Obama administration officials ordered the reports to be doctored, the five-month investigation did corroborate earlier reports that analysts felt the leaders of CENTCOM's intelligence directorate pressured them to conclude that the threat from ISIS was not as ominous as the analysts believed, the officials said.

"The investigation is ongoing but the report substantiates the claims" that intelligence reports were altered, one official familiar with the report explained to The Daily Beast. Another official said that the investigation could remain open even after report is released.

The task force, led by members of the House Armed Services and Intelligence committees and the Defense Appropriations subcommittee, was created after The Daily Beast first reported that [more than 50 analysts had filed a formal complaint](#) alleging their reports on [ISIS](#) and al Qaeda's branch in Syria were being inappropriately altered by senior officials. Some told The Daily Beast they felt they were working in a hostile, toxic office where they felt "[bullied](#)" to draw conclusions not supported by the facts.

Some of the intelligence made its way into briefings presented to President Obama. However, administration officials have consistently said that they have confidence in CENTCOM's reports and that they don't believe White House policy was guided by false or misleading analysis.

The House committee cannot directly punish officials found to have acted inappropriately. But the fact that the appropriations committee was part of the investigation implies that if the military doesn't respond to the findings, lawmakers could punish CENTCOM by curtailing funds.

CENTCOM officials told The Daily Beast they cannot comment on the report as they have yet to receive it. There also is separate Department of Defense Inspector General investigation into the claims which is ongoing and could release its findings as early as this fall, one official said. The DoD IG report could make recommendations that CENTCOM must act on.

But some of CENTCOM's intelligence analysts already are concerned that the DoD IG report will not have as much teeth as the House Republican task force report. These military analysts told The Beast that the head of CENTCOM's intelligence directorate, Maj. Gen. Steven Grove, and his civilian deputy, Gregory Ryckman, had [deleted emails and files](#) from computer systems before the inspector general could examine them.

Even the House Republican investigation faced obstacles to its work. Analysts told The Daily Beast, that CENTCOM officials were, at times, [in the room](#) while they spoke to House investigators, making some feel they could not speak candidly.

What remains unclear is what led CENTCOM to call for more positive conclusions. Was it a decision by Grove or Ryckman or did come from higher up?

As part of a normal deployment rotation, Grove left CENTCOM's intelligence directorate this summer and now is stationed at the Pentagon as director of the Army Quadrennial Defense

Review Office. He has been replaced by Maj. Gen. Mark R. Quantock. Ryckman remains in the same position.

After the analysts' complaints emerged publicly, President Obama, Secretary of Defense Ash Carter and current CENTCOM commander Army Gen. Joseph Votel have called for what Carter described as "unvarnished intelligence."

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