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Operation Warp Speed is Using a CIA-Linked Contractor to Keep Covid-19 Vaccine Contracts Secret



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📅 October 6, 2020 👤 Whitney Webb 💬 Comments(8)

\$6 billion in Covid-19 vaccine contracts awarded by Operation Warp Speed have been doled out by a secretive government contractor with deep ties to the CIA and DHS, escaping regulatory scrutiny and beyond the reach of FOIA requests.

Last Tuesday, while most Americans were distracted by the first US presidential debate, *NPR* quietly reported that the US government's Operation Warp Speed, a public-private partnership launched by the Trump administration to rapidly develop and distribute a Covid-19 vaccine, had taken the unusual step of awarding contracts to vaccine companies, not directly, but through a secretive defense contractor.

Though *NPR* named the defense contractor—South Carolina-based Advanced Technology International—they declined to explore the company's deep ties to the CIA, Department of Homeland Security, and the Department of Defense and how ATI is helping to lead those agencies' efforts to militarize health care and create a surveillance panopticon that not only monitors the world around us but our physiology as well.

The "secret" vaccine contracts awarded through ATI as part of Warp Speed total approximately \$6 billion, accounting for the majority of Operation Warp Speed's \$10 billion budget. Both Paul Mango, Health and Human Services' deputy chief of staff for policy, and Robert Kadlec, HHS assistant secretary for preparedness and response (ASPR), personally signed off on the contracts.

Operation Warp Speed, which officially involves the combined efforts of HHS and the military to deliver over 300 million Covid-19 vaccines to Americans by next January, is a highly secretive program dominated by military personnel, most of whom have no experience in health care or vaccine production. The Trump administration has often compared Warp Speed to the Manhattan Project, which produced the atomic bomb.

Several very unsettling revelations about the true nature and scope of Warp Speed, including the out-sized role of ATI, began to emerge starting last Monday. Yet, most of this new information was not covered by US news outlets due to the media frenzy surrounding the first presidential debate and the subsequent news that President Trump and several other politicians and White House officials had tested positive for Covid-19.

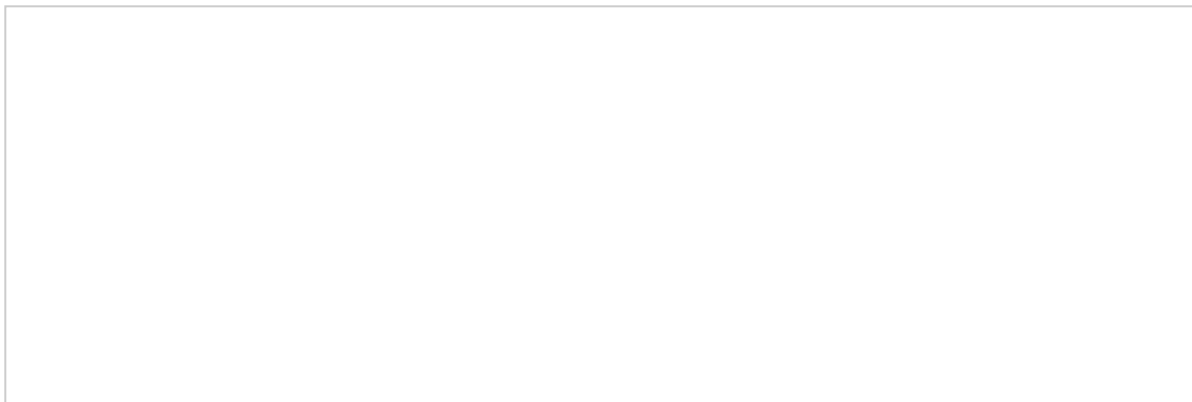
NPR noted that the decision to use a nongovernment intermediary like ATI to issue the coronavirus vaccine contracts, as opposed to the government itself directly awarding those contracts, allow Operation Warp Speed to "bypass the regulatory oversight and transparency of traditional feder...



The report from *NPR* also noted that the Congressional Research Service **reported just last year** that using such intermediaries to award contracts can result in “significant risks, including potentially diminished oversight and exemption from laws and regulations designed to protect government and taxpayer interests.” Proponents of this unorthodox way of issuing contracts, known as “other transaction agreements” (OTAs), often argue that utilizing this alternative method for awarding contracts significantly hastens the process. However, the Congressional Research Service also noted that the Department of Defense, which has been increasingly relying on OTAs in recent years, has never tracked the information necessary to determine if OTAs are actually faster than traditional contracting methods. This suggests that claims regarding the alleged “speed advantage” of OTAs are based on assumptions rather than data-based evidence.

Johnson & Johnson, Novavax, Pfizer, and Sanofi are among the companies that have received these covert vaccine contracts through the OTA authorized by Operation Warp Speed and managed by ATI. Many of these companies, **particularly Johnson & Johnson**, have been involved in scandals related to selling and **marketing products they knew to be unsafe** to the public. This makes the lack of oversight and their exemption from federal regulations (including safety regulations) an issue of concern regarding their participation in Warp Speed.

This concern is further compounded by the fact that, on September 21, HHS Secretary Alex Azar **told *FOX Business*** that all Operation Warp Speed vaccine manufacturers would be exempt from liability for any damages their vaccines may cause and that those who administer their vaccines would also not be liable for damages. “Under the PREP Act, which is a provision in Congress, any treatment or vaccine for purposes of a national emergency pandemic like this actually comes with liability protection. Both the product as well as those who administer it or provide it,” Azar stated during the televised interview. The PREP Act that Azar referenced was originally signed into law in 2005 but was **updated this past April**, a few weeks before Operation Warp Speed was announced, so that vaccine and therapeutic manufacturers “cannot be sued for money damages in court” over injuries caused by medical countermeasures for Covid-19.





WASHINGTON, DC – MARCH 02: Flanked by U.S. Vice President Mike Pence (L) and Secretary of Health and Human Services Alex Azar, U.S. President Donald Trump leads a meeting with the White House Coronavirus Task Force and pharmaceutical executives in Cabinet Room of the White House on March 2, 2020 in Washington, DC. President Trump and his Coronavirus Task Force team met with pharmaceutical companies representatives who are actively working to develop a COVID-19 vaccine. (Photo by Drew Angerer/Getty Images)

Notably, **the architect** of that controversial April update to the PREP Act, HHS ASPR Kadlec, is intimately involved in deciding who is awarded Operation Warp Speed contracts. **STAT News reported** last week, citing senior HHS officials, that Kadlec “personally signs off” on every business agreement made on behalf of HHS for Operation Warp Speed. In addition to **his past** activities in lobbying for intelligence and defense contractors, Kadlec also previously worked as a lobbyist for **the scandal-ridden biodefense company Emergent Biosolutions**, which is also a major player in Operation Warp Speed as well as the manufacturer of the controversial anthrax vaccine BioThrax.

Despite top HHS officials allegedly overseeing every single one of these business agreements, **NPR was told** by HHS that the department has “no records” of the \$1.6 billion Operation Warp Speed contract with Novavax, which was awarded through ATI. This is a strange response given that HHS is supposedly the lead agency overseeing Operation Warp Speed, yet they somehow lack a copy of a massive vaccine contract at the heart of the operation. **NPR** also asked the DoD for a copy of the Novavax contract and have yet to receive a response.





States government and private entities, and they are releasable to an extent. Obviously everything cannot be released, but they are releasable to an extent and they will be made available at some point in time.” Ostrowski declined to elaborate on when that “point in time” would be.

Also odd is that ATI told *NPR* that, at the time they were awarding these secretive vaccine contracts, it was never explicitly told by the Department of Defense that these contracts were part of Operation Warp Speed, with a former ATI executive describing that key fact as “invisible” to the company.

Spooks and Skunkworks

Advanced Technology International (ATI) is a nonprofit company that organizes consortia of public, private, and academic organizations that perform research and development (R&D) on behalf of the US government. ATI mostly manages R&D consortia for the Department of Defense for things like weapons manufacturing, metal casting and forging, ship production, and technology aimed at countering so-called weapons of mass destruction. They also manage the **Border Security Technology Consortium** (BSTC) for the Department of Homeland Security, primarily **surveillance technology companies**, among other DHS research projects.

ATI only currently manages two consortia that have any relationship to health care, **the Medical Technology Enterprise Consortium** (MTEC) and the Medical CBRN Defense Consortium (MCDC). The MTEC, operating on behalf of the US Army Medical Research and Development Command, **aims to** “accelerate the development of revolutionary medical solutions,” **which include** gene editing, nanotechnology, “telehealth solutions,” artificial limbs, and brain implants. They are also **currently developing** a wearable device that would diagnose individuals with Covid-19 before symptoms appear.

The other ATI-managed “health-care” consortia, the MCDC, is **focused on** “advanced development efforts to support the Department of Defense’s (DoD) medical pharmaceutical and diagnostic requirements to counter Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear (CBRN) threat agents.”

They are specifically **involved in** “enabling prototype technologies for therapeutic medical countermeasures targeting viral, bacterial and biological toxin targets of interest to the DoD,” including the development of vaccines. ATI told *NPR* that they were contacted by the DoD sometime between March and April, before Warp Speed was announced in May, and asked to issue requests for proposals related to Covid-19 from MCDC members.

MCDC members include Emergent Biosolutions as well as DoD/CIA contractor Battelle Memorial Institute, with both of those companies having **unsettling ties** to the 2001 anthrax attacks. Another



Services Inc. (ANSER), the principal sponsor of the Dark Winter **bioterror simulation, with eighteen new members added** just three months after the acquisition had concluded.

In addition, there is considerable overlap between the MCDC and the vaccine companies that have been awarded secretive contracts through ATI as part of Operation Warp Speed. Sanofi, Novavax, Pfizer, and Johnson & Johnson are all MCDC members as well as recipients of Warp Speed vaccine contracts. In addition, Emergent Biosolutions, another MCDC member, **was awarded a major Warp Speed contract** to manufacture Covid-19 vaccines, but that contract was awarded through HHS Biomedical Advanced Research and Development Authority (BARDA), not ATI.

ANSER's Rise, Its Fall, and Its Saving Grace

In February 2017, ATI **was acquired by** Analytic Services Inc. ANSER, like ATI, manages R&D projects for the federal government, historically for DHS, with ANSER being the long-time manager of one of the two DHS federally funded research and development centers. However, ANSER also provides services to the DoD, NASA, the State Department, and the US intelligence community.

ANSER was originally founded as a spin-off from the RAND Corporation in the late 1950s, but it became a much larger part of government operations, particularly in the realm of Homeland Security, after Ruth David became its president and CEO in 1998. Prior to becoming ANSER's CEO, **David had been** the deputy director for science and technology at the CIA, where, among other things, she **laid the groundwork** for what would become In-Q-Tel, the CIA's venture capital arm responsible for the rise of several Silicon Valley behemoths such as Google and Palantir. David led ANSER until 2015. After David took charge, ANSER **became an early leader** in promoting the use of biometric and facial recognition software by US law enforcement agencies and became a key driver in pivoting the government toward "homeland defense" and "homeland security" in the years leading up to the events of September 11, 2001.

As journalist Margie Burns noted in **a 2002 article**, the rise of "homeland defense" as a centerpiece of US government policy, including the push to create a new "homeland security" agency, began with former State Department official Richard Armitage's alleged coining of the term in 1997 in a National Defense Policy document. In the years that followed, this pivot toward seeing the American homeland as a future battlefield was heavily promoted by a web of media outlets owned by **South Korean cult leader and CIA asset** Sun Myong Moon, including the *Washington Times*, *Insight Magazine*, and *UPI*. All published numerous articles either penned by ANSER analysts or that heavily cited ANSER reports and employees regarding the need for a greatly expanded "homeland security" apparatus.





Lt. Gen. Paul A. Ostrowski, deputy commander at Army Futures Command under commanding general Mike Murray. (Photo by Catherine DeRan/U.S. Army)

In October 1999, at David’s behest, ANSER created the Institute for Homeland Security (ANSER-IHS). Though fully funded and established at that time, but for reasons still unclear, the ANSER-IHS was not formally launched until April 2001. The Institute’s first director was Randall Larsen, who was at that time—and still is today—a **close associate** of current HHS ASPR Robert Kadlec. Though ANSER has never explained the reason behind the lengthy delay in officially launching ANSER-IHS, it is possible that the timing was related to the introduction of H.R.1158 in March 2001. That bill called for the creation of the National Homeland Security Agency, which was the foundation of the later Department of Homeland Security.

One month after ANSER-IHS was created, *Insight Magazine* published an article in May 2001 entitled “**Preparing for the Next Pearl Harbor**,” which heavily cited ANSER and its Institute for Homeland Security as being among “the nation’s top experts” in warning that a terrorist attack on the US mainland was imminent. It also stated that “the first responders on tomorrow’s battlefield won’t be soldiers, but city ambulance workers and small-town firefighters.”

The following month, ANSER-IHS **cohosted** the Dark Winter exercise, with two top ANSER-IHS officials, Mark DeMier and Randall Larsen, **cowriting** the exercise with Tara O’Toole and Thomas Inglesby of the Johns Hopkins Center for Civilian Biodefense Studies (now the Johns Hopkins Center for Health Security). O’Toole, at the time, was on the **ANSER-IHS board of advisers**.





initial, yet false, narrative for those attacks—that Iraq and Al Qaeda were working together to conduct acts of bioterrorism on US soil. However, the anthrax used in the attacks was quickly determined to have either originated from a US military lab or a US defense contractor.

ANSER's convenient gamble that the US government would imminently pivot toward homeland security soon after April 2001 paid off tremendously. Thanks largely to the fear stoked by 9/11 and the 2001 anthrax attacks, the Department of Homeland Security was created, and ANSER-IHS quickly became the first government think tank, that is, federally funded research and development center.

Not long after its formal creation as an agency, DHS established its Science and Technology (S & T) Directorate in 2003 with the mission "to protect the homeland by providing . . . officials with state-of-the-art technology." DHS **later announced** in 2004 that it had "selected [ANSER] to operate the Homeland Security Institute . . . [f]ollowing a full and open competition procurement process conducted by [DHS] Science and Technology." This is despite this very institute having already been funded and established by ANSER in 1999 and then launched in 2001.

From 2009 to 2013, the head of DHS Science and Technology Directorate was Dark Winter coauthor and bioterror alarmist Tara O'Toole, who had long-standing, close ties to ANSER-IHS, as previously mentioned. With O'Toole at the helm, DHS **focused on** "more robust public-private sector partnerships" and "increasing the budget for innovative, longer-term technology projects," such as those overseen by ANSER on the behalf of DHS. She also made it her mission to model the S & T Directorate more closely after the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA).

During her tenure, **DHS also claimed to be "unaware"** of how the department's multibillion dollar research expenditures were being used, suggesting a lack of oversight in the millions of dollars DHS S & T was funneling to the ANSER-run research center and the other DHS research center, which is run by the **equally shady MITRE Corporation**.

Unexpectedly for ANSER, DHS **declined to renew** ANSER's federally funded research and development center contract in October 2016. They instead awarded that contract to the RAND Corporation, which created a new research and development center with "a different set of focus areas, aligned more closely with current DHS priorities." ANSER's apparent plans for restructuring following the loss of this critical contract included its decision to acquire ATI, which took place just a few months later in February 2017.

The acquisition of ATI gave ANSER access to the key OTA research consortia that ATI manages, ensuring that ANSER's board of former intelligence officials, military officers, and defense-industry executives continued to wield considerable influence over the direction of government-funded



execute “thought leadership independent of commercial influences” over the “important defense technology developments” being overseen by ATI. Thus, whatever decisions are being made by ATI with respect to these secretive Operation Warp Speed vaccine contracts, it is ultimately ANSER that is signing off on them.

Mess Hall

Given that Operation Warp Speed’s official purpose is to use taxpayer funds to produce, accelerate, and distribute a medical treatment (i. e., vaccine) to Americans, there is no reason for such extreme secrecy and also no reason for the excessive role of the military and secretive contractors like ATI and ANSER in the execution of this “public health” effort.

While the officially stated purpose of Warp Speed makes the extreme secrecy involved seem not just unnecessary but absurd, it is worth noting that several recent revelations regarding Warp Speed’s structure, strategy, and execution strongly suggest that the reason for the operation’s covert nature is because its scope goes well beyond its publicly stated purpose.

For instance, *Stat News* noted last week that Operation Warp Speed “looks a lot more like a military operation than a science project,” adding that “roughly 60 military officials—including at least four generals—are involved in the leadership of Operation Warp Speed, many of whom have never worked in health care or vaccine development.” That report also pointed out that “just 29 of the roughly 90 leaders on the chart aren’t employed by the Department of Defense.”

Though the military’s initial justification for playing such a major role in Warp Speed was related to its “expertise” in logistics and supply chains, the recent release of the operation’s vaccine distribution strategy makes no direct mention of the military’s role in those aspects of Warp Speed. So noticeable was the disconnect that, soon after the release of the official distribution strategy, the Department of Defense “clarified” the military’s role in the operation by publishing an interview on its website with Lt. Gen. Ostrowski, who is leading Warp Speed’s efforts to supply, produce, and distribute vaccines. Per Ostrowski, the reason the military is playing such an outside role in Warp Speed is because of the military’s “program management and contracting expertise.”

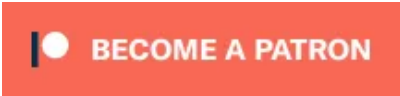
Yet, as this article has shown, Warp Speed contracts are being funneled through secretive contractors to avoid scrutiny and are apparently not being made available to HHS, the civilian agency supposedly “co-leading” Warp Speed alongside the military.

Such examples of extreme secrecy and conflicting statements appear to be just scratching the surface of what Operation Warp Speed truly aims to accomplish. An upcoming series of investigat



expose Operation Warp Speed as the most clandestine, and arguably most dangerous, US military operation in decades. Unlike such well-funded and secretive military operations of years past, this one is aimed directly at the American people.

Question Everything, Come To Your Own Conclusions.



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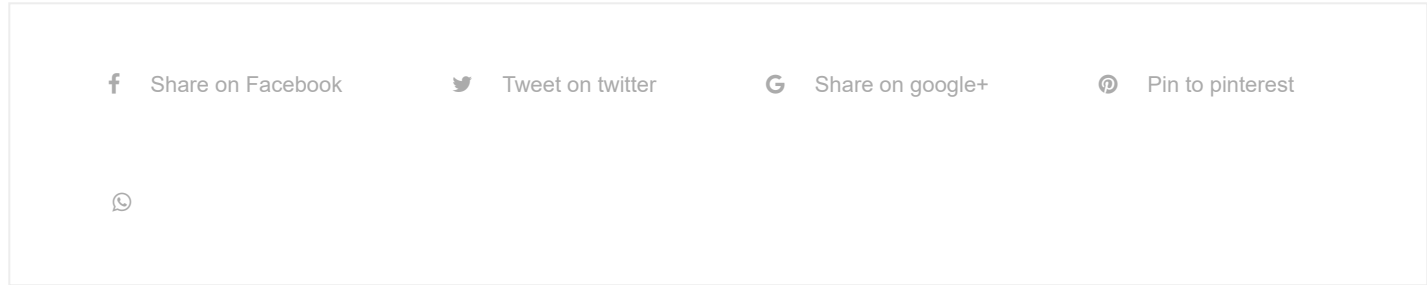
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In "Article of the week"



The Head of Operation Warp Speed & The Gates Foundation Are Pushing BioElectronics & Vaccine Patches
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