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Leaked emails show US security firm helping Syrian rebels

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Leaked emails show an American private security company, SCG International has been helping the Syrian opposition in its efforts to overthrow President Bashar al-Assad at the request of US officials.

The whistleblower website, Wikileaks, released the emails sent by SCG Chief Executive James F. Smith, the former director of the notorious company Blackwater, which is blamed for the killing of many civilians in Iraq and Afghanistan.

In one of the emails, Smith says his company was contracted to engage the Turkey-based Syrian opposition in a so-called “fact finding mission,” but “the true mission is how they can help in regime change.”

The emails were sent to the vice president of intelligence at Stratfor, Fred Burton. Stratfor, a US-based global security think tank, describes itself as a source of geopolitical analysis to corporate and government clients.

Smith introduces his company to Burton by saying his "background is CIA and his company is comprised of former Department of Defense (DoD), CIA and former law enforcement personnel," and his company provides services for those same groups in the form of training, security and information collection.

SCG's mission with the Syrian opposition had "air cover from US Congresswoman Sue Myrick," a Republican lawmaker from North Carolina, according to the emails.

Smith also provided intelligence to Stratfor on Libya, where SCG International was contracted to protect Libyan National Transitional Council (NTC) members and train Libyan rebel fighters.

Impressed by Smith's intelligence, Burton praises him in one of the emails saying "Good skinny. This is what is defined as a credible source. Not some windbag Paki academic belching and passing gas."

The emails are among a trove of five million messages hacked from Stratfor in mid-December by the hacker group Anonymous.