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US set to establish new spy network as big as CIA: Report

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The Pentagon has embarked on an ambitious plan to establish an overseas espionage network which is expected to incorporate a colossal structure of operatives as big as the CIA, a report says.

According to the US officials, the new scenario has been devised to transform the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) into a spy service more focused than the CIA on military aspects, the *Washington Post* reported on Sunday.

Pentagon's new espionage network, the Defense Clandestine Service (DCS), is scheduled to be closely aligned with the CIA and the military commando units.

Based on the planned structure, the DCS is expected to recruit an unprecedented number of 1,600 clandestine operatives called "collectors" across the world over the next five years.

The DCS operatives will be trained by the CIA and cooperate with the US Joint Special Operations Command, but they will receive their espionage assignments from the Department of Defense.

"This is not a marginal adjustment for DIA... This is a major adjustment for national security," said DIA Director Lieutenant General Michael T. Flynn at a recent conference in which he outlined the transformations without mentioning the details.

The new US espionage scenario is spearheaded by Michael G. Vickers, who is a senior intelligence official at the Pentagon and a CIA veteran.

The DIA and CIA have agreed to share resources overseas, including technical equipment, logistics support, space in facilities and vehicles.

The DIA has also adopted some structural features of the CIA by establishing a group called "Persia House," tasked with collecting resources on Iran, the Post said. Pentagon and DIA officials have declined to elaborate on the specifics of the project.

Pundits say the DCS espionage unmask the Obama administration's strategy of preference for espionage and covert action over conventional force.

The plan, however, faces obstacles ahead as it needs to create "cover" jobs for hundreds of additional spies.

According to the report, US embassies typically have a number of positions for intelligence operatives to work under the guise of diplomats, but most of the slots are already filled by the CIA.

The DCS espionage project has also faced opposition from the lawmakers at the US Congress.