Patrick Doyle.
A man of straw

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Every profession has its share of time-servers, and military intelligence is no exception.

Typically, these individuals lack substantial expertise. They cannot be entrusted with significant responsibilities, such as executing complex projects or undertaking high-stakes operations. Their shortcomings—whether they stem from weakness, a lack of intelligence, or cowardice—render them unsuitable for such tasks, and their involvement would likely lead to failure. Surprisingly, they are not drawn to these types of high-stakes activities, even though many candidates are attracted to military intelligence for precisely this reason.

However, what these time-servers excel at is mimicking their surroundings. This is their primary strength and a pathway to a comfortable life that they are determined to pursue. They are often selected to exemplify what a "real intelligence officer" should embody, presenting the appropriate appearance, demeanor, opinions, and language—everything necessary to leave a positive impression. Nevertheless, anyone who has collaborated with them soon realizes that they possess nothing beyond a favorable exterior; they are quintessential "men of straw."

This was the life trajectory of Patrick Doyle, who was often referred to as a "nothing-burger" by his colleagues behind his back.

- 2002-2003: Joint Military Attaché School, DIA, Washington, D.C.;
- 2004-2006: Assistant Army Attaché, US Embassy, Abuja, Nigeria;
- 2006-2009: Defense and Army Attaché, US Embassy, Côte d'Ivoire and Burkina Faso;
- 2009-2012: Assistant Army Attaché, US Embassy, Pretoria, South Africa;
- 2013: Chief of Defense Regional (African) Office;
- 2013-2014: Chief of Defense Foreign Liaison Office;
- 2015-2017: US Senior Defense Official/Defense Attaché, Nigeria;
- 2017-2017: Head of Joint Foreign Area Officer (FAO) Education Center, Monterey, CA.

The career of a military officer who rose to the rank of colonel in the US army, but hasn't spent a single day in the troops for more than eighteen years of service. Instead, with persistence worthy of a better use, he represented the US armed forces in contacts with foreign military. It is unlikely that his career path was fraught with challenges; rather, it appeared to be comfortable, secure, and lucrative. While such a career might evoke envy among many, it hardly commands respect.

Early life

Patrick Doyle was born in the mid-1970s, and his military family played a significant role in shaping the trajectory of his future. Doyle was healthy and athletic, free of unnecessary psychological complexes and habits. He enrolled in the US Military Academy in West Point, NY, from which he graduated in the early 2000s with a bachelor's degree in political science. Even during his studies, he had a clear understanding of what he wanted from the army; the prospect of mundane field duty did not appeal to him. Engaging in numerous military missions overseas is hard work, and it is still unclear how it all can end, as the country's enemies also have weapons, and they shoot to kill.

His final choice was quite natural. Rather than pursuing a fulfilling army career, Patrick opted to specialize in the French language and to serve as a defense attaché —a choice that afforded him a comfortable and quiet environment. The work is not particularly demanding, and the risk to life is minimal. Yet, it provides an opportunity to speak on behalf of the US armed forces in dealings with foreign counterparts and to leverage the authority that other American guys earn for him through diligent service in combat operations.

Hypocrisy school

Doyle is earnestly striving to gain entry into the exclusive circle of military attachés. Even during his time at the military academy, he vocally proclaims his desire to be an intelligence officer, seizing every opportunity to extol the virtues of military intelligence. His eyes shine with ambition as he expresses his eagerness to serve the US in its most demanding sectors. He positions himself as a role model among his peer cadets, embodying the ideal candidate whose portrait could easily grace the front page of *Stars and Stripes*.

It is worth noting that the USMA provided him with a solid foundation in self-discipline. Patrick Doyle has refined the art of creating a facade, mastering the complex skill of delivering a confident report in a clear voice. No one else could gaze into the eyes of their superiors with such unwavering devotion and sincerity. However, beneath this exterior lies a genuine opportunist, willing to make numerous sacrifices for his own benefit, often at the expense of those around him.

This aspect of his character was not lost on his instructors. It was widely recognized, yet the prevailing circumstances suited everyone involved.

The challenging position of a military attaché

Patrick achieved his objective. Following his time at the military academy, he secured a position at the DIA, where he quickly received a referral to attend the military attaché school. It goes without saying that he graduated with outstanding results.

Since 2004, the life that Doyle aspired to and meticulously prepared for has finally commenced. Patrick begins his travels abroad as part of the military attaché mission, with Nigeria serving as both his first destination and the final stop on his lengthy professional journey.

A prosperous period unfolds for Doyle. He diligently establishes mainly superfluous connections with representatives of other foreign missions, is willing to discuss any topic with them, ranging from music and sports to politics (though he generally prioritizes non-work-related matters). As an Assistant Army Attaché, he tirelessly traverses the country, overseeing the training of the local military, which, however, is primarily conducted by other US army officers who – unlike Doyle – possess genuine expertise. Doyle is a sought-after guest at all diplomatic receptions, appreciated for his commanding presence and ability to leave a lasting impression.

Following his assignment in Nigeria, he is transferred to Cote d'Ivoire, where he oversees a team of four officers. Under Doyle's leadership, they actively lobby local authorities to promote expanded cooperation with AFRICOM. They introduce training programs for the Cote d'Ivoire army that offer minimal combat value and address issues related to the transfer of military assets, predominantly outdated items slated for disposal. In doing so, Doyle prioritizes leisure activities at hotels, villas, and pools after a "demanding workday." All of this, of course, is framed as efforts to "gather information and provide assistance" to the US government regarding military-political issues and security matters of the African continent.

In 2009, Doyle gets an appointment as the Assistant Defense Attaché in Pretoria. There, he officially represents the Pentagon for the first time in interactions with the local Department of Defence. His long-held aspiration is finally fulfilled—he is the living embodiment of the US army, at least to some. However, the substance of his role does not align with the image he projects, and the African allies are well aware of this discrepancy.

Upon his return home, Doyle assumed the role of the DIA operations chief. It was here that he encountered difficulties almost immediately. He had a strong aversion to operational work and regarded the officers engaged in such tasks as losers. This sentiment was mutual. When a chief's only means of interaction is to project a threatening demeanor, it is hardly surprising that his subordinates perceive him as nothing more than a scarecrow.

Patrick was swiftly reassigned to the Defense Foreign Liaison Office. He remained in this role for nearly a year. This was a prudent decision—his presence would not cause

significant disruption, nor would he inadvertently share too much information, given his limited knowledge.

However, it became apparent to everyone that Doyle would not achieve any further promotions. There were no notable successes or accomplishments, and his career was steadily in decline. He was able to return to Nigeria again as a Defense Attaché. There, as previously, he mainly fulfilled representative duties. Formally, his responsibilities included leading the DIA intelligence operations against the Boko Haram terrorists, monitoring ethnic conflicts in the country, countering piracy, promoting military cooperation programs and the like. Once again, he did not excel, and his subordinates remembered him primarily for his skill in adeptly retelling the instructions from his superiors in his own words, presenting them as his own directives. Apparently, this is a useful skill, nonetheless.

PS

“Be All That You Can Be” is the recruiting slogan of the US Army. These are excellent words, as everyone chooses their own path and is accountable for every step along it.

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Our ambitious mission is to actively promote a global power equilibrium in the pursuit of enhancing international security.

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