

Cubic Sets the Trap: Acquiring Abraxas and Trapwire was Evil Genius

by John Stanton

“Cubic is the world’s leading provider of automated payment and fare collection systems and services for the transportation industry.”

Cubic’s purchase of Abraxas in 2010 for \$124 million (US) in cash made sense looking at where the \$1.2 billion dollar Cubic Company does business. A large chunk of that money comes from its Defense Systems and Mission Support Operations segments (where Abraxas is apparently operating). Roughly \$415 million comes from its Transportation division.

Cubic’s acquisition of Abraxas and its magic bag full of electronic tracking/snooping tools was made two years prior to the 2012 Olympic Games in London. In 2011. The transit authority there had recently installed video cameras on all of its 191 buses.

According to a report in the London Free Press, “Big Brother is watching passengers on London buses. All 191 vehicles in the Londo Transit fleet have been fitted with surveillance cameras Buses are equipped with three cameras recording the interior of the bus -- above the driver, at the front entrance and at the rear exit -- and one camera recording the vehicle's exterior. Following the lead of other big-city transit systems, the \$730,800 project started in September as a way to make buses safer for both passengers and drivers. 'It creates a sense of safety and security,' said London Transit manager Larry Ducharme. A sign on the entrance to buses tells passengers they're being recorded.”

Enter Cubic’s Abraxas

Cubic’s 2011 Annual Report notes the following: “For the London 2012 Olympic Games, our contactless payment solution will be widely deployed onboard the massive London bus fleet. Transport riders in the capital city will be able to use their credit or debit cards in the same way as the Oyster® card. Ultimately, we will be providing similar capability in the United States, Europe, and Australia.”

Was TrapWire integrated as part of Cubic’s rider payment system or as an additional contract add-on?

Back here in the USA Cubic has been very busy. “Cubic and PATCO have partnered to provide the Philadelphia/New Jersey region commuters with the world’s first prepaid transit branded Visa.”

And probably have your picture taken too.

Cubic also has a large presence in RFID markets around the globe. Its purchase of Safe Harbor Holdings back in June of 2010 gave it a stronger presence in the cyber security market. Cubic has made itself a one stop national security business. It is not Abraxas or TrapWire which should be the focus of concern for all of we "little people", it is giants like Cubic that have a hand in nearly every aspect of daily life that are truly frightening. They make little distinction between civilian and national security practices and, in fact, merge both as part of their business model. Then again it is the same with the US government. Cubic donates 77 percent of its political cash to Republicans and related PAC's. Of course, the Democrats and Republicans are nearly one in the same.

Cubic like many of its corporate comrades have all the power bases covered. They have extraordinary powers bestowed upon them by the three branches of the US government. And it all filters down to the state and local levels. There is no end in sight as long as the War on Terror continues which means there is no light at the end of a very dark tunnel.

The struggle is not to get off the grid. The fight is to somehow remain ambiguous on it since there is no escape.

John Stanton is a Virginia based writer specializing in national security matters. Reach him at cioran123@yahoo.com