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Espionage 2.0

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Wikis and RSS are now parts of the spy's arsenal too

By Ian Douglas

> *Ian Douglas joined the Telegraph in 1999 when the web was young and simple,*
> *and is now head of digital production. He writes about technology, science, and the internet.*

You might think that the world of online media is a switched-on sort of a place full of early adopters enthusing about Pownce, Facebook or whatever else the latest trendy bit of social software might be, but sadly that's not always the case.

I spend a surprisingly large amount of my time persuading people that this isn't just fluffy nonsense, so it's always good to find large conservative institutions that are adopting wikis and social networking. This week: military intelligence.

An article in *Military Information Technology* Magazine (not one of my regular reads, I have to admit. It was reprinted in *Social Computing Magazine* and linked to by *Headshift*) details the work of **Lab X in the US Defense Intelligence Agency.**

Just having the name Lab X would make it pretty exciting in my book, but they're also a military espionage organisation who have set up a knowledge-sharing wiki called Intellopedia which is becoming the first-choice source for reference information for American spies; a mashup tool for building Pentagon intelligence briefings from data in the semantically-tagged Alien [All-source Intelligence Environment] database that links up to Google Earth; an image-sharing application called Gallery that was developed and deployed in three days; and RSS feeds generated from web searches, email accounts and wiki updates.

Much of Lab X's work is based on existing open source applications, so they have an extensive security testing programme and anonymous access is not allowed.

Lewis Shepherd, chief of the requirements and research group at the Defense Intelligence Agency, said: "Lab X is the rapid prototyping environment where we post beta versions of software that are not quite ready for prime time. The applications are fully vetted and tested without causing any damage to data or to the infrastructure."