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It's a Bird...It's a Plane...NO, It's Waste!!!

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WASTE REPORT for July 11, 2016
It's a Bird... It's a Plane... NO, It's Waste!!!

If there is anything superheroes are known for, it is fighting crime. But could a superhero cartoon be used as a tool to deter terrorists in the real world? Well, Uncle Sam seems to think so and is spending taxpayer money on such an effort... in Pakistan.

That is right!! The Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL), which is part of the Department of State, is currently advertising a **\$1.25 million grant opportunity to produce a superhero cartoon in Pakistan.**¹

In total, INL is asking for 292 minutes of animation to be created over two 13-episode seasons, which comes out to **\$4,280 a minute from American taxpayers.** It sounds like our government is again playing the villain in the story of fiscal responsibility.

According to the solicitation, “the goal of the animated TV series is to inform, educate, and positively influence Pakistani youth (ages 14-25) **through the creation of a strong role model** who empowers youth in a way that aligns with INL’s mission.” Of course, 14- to 25-year-olds are probably less taken in by cartoon superheroes than younger viewers. Nonetheless, INL specifically is seeking to promote a drug-free lifestyle, gender equality, a fair criminal justice system, anti-corruption, and religious tolerance, among other things.

This may be a tall order, considering the superhero we’re paying to create must be **fully immersed in Pakistani life and culture** - a culture where, though illegal, women can be publicly stoned for dishonoring their family while police look the other way, and where **Osama Bin Laden was given safe harbor while the informant that outed him to U.S. personnel was sent to prison for 33 years for doing so.**²

Of course, Pakistan has something of its own real-life superhero in Malala Yousafzai, the young girl who was shot in the head by the Taliban for having the audacity to go to school. Her story of recovery and unyielding resolve to continue to fight for many of the same goals as INL earned her a Nobel Peace Prize. **It is hard to imagine a fictional superhero that could possibly be a better role model to her generation and people than Malala³... so why are we spending your money to try to create one?**

¹*Animated Media Campaign to Promote Security and Stability in Pakistan*; Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL), U.S. Department of State; U.S. Embassy Islamabad, Pakistan; June 2016

² <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/may/23/doctor-bin-laden-cia-jail>

³ <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2015/country-chapters/pakistan>