



Source: 'Iran's populist President has a divine mission on his mind', *Telegraph* in *The Age*, 15/01/06.

Tags: [espionage](#), [security](#), [surveillance](#), [travel](#)
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Erica opens the long pink envelope with the EVOL company logo designed as an embroidered eye.

Congratulations! You have been selected...

She feels a thrill go through her thighs and down to her toes.

Your credentials are perfect: our surveillance team has checked your family background, your G-card, your medical history, work profile, social connections, bank balance, psychological affects, your dental work, optometrist charts and your DNA. Your ability to be alert but not alarmed has been tested. You have passed with flying colours.

Erica gulps.

Welcome to EVOL [Elite Volunteers]. Excitement and danger await you. On the 29th you will board the QZ-2, which has been requisitioned and refurbished by the security agencies of the nine nations comprising the axis of love. EVOL has evolved from their deliberations, their intelligent designs. The ship has been fitted out as a cruise ship for tourists—the Lovely Messenger—disguising its real purpose as a training ship for you, and all our support spies.

As a volunteer you will, of course, be unpaid. There is no need for insurance or industrial award. We will look after you. After all, the real rewards are absolutely fabulous—a luxury cruise, visiting secret locations and islands all around the South Pacific and up to the Indian Ocean; an Onya laptop with hidden camera for recording suspicious persons, events, objects and installations, a car and kitchen refit as part of your long service prize, and a stetson, for line dancing with your fellow trainees.

On board the QZ-2 you will be entertained nightly. You will dance under the moon to the music of the U-hug Bandadees, enjoy delicious cocktails you've never heard of from the bar and chat to our volunteer celebrities. During the day you will swim and play shuffleboard; Trivial Dissent; Surveillance Bingo; and Monopoly by Stealth. Or you may prefer to join a quilting party.

You will have a new wardrobe, mobile phone and identity. Yes, we have tested your acting ability too!

Attached to the letter are some drawings, plans and charts detailing the inner levels of the ship where training would occur. They are accompanied by a red warning sticker: FOR REVEALING THESE PLANS THERE WILL BE SEVERE PENALTIES. This makes Erica wonder—were the plans fake? Was this a test of her ability to keep her mouth shut? She reads on: Yes, you are right, the charts are fake. The real ones are waiting for you in your cabin. We are still only 99% sure you would never reveal our secrets.

There is a date and an address to report to.

Be there or be square, Erica. Your country needs you. We know your commitment to Security issues, your Loyalty, and your Intelligence will only grow stronger as you go

through the training program we have designed for you.

Erica pinches herself. She must be dreaming! Never in her wildest dreams had she thought she would be selected. She'd only filled in the forms for a joke...

The very next morning Erica wakes to a knock on the door. 'Who's there?' she calls. 'Me!' a woman's voice answers. 'Who?' 'I'm Trisha, your EVOL rep. I've come to help you sign up.' Erica opens the door. Beyond the flyscreen is a small red and black striped haired woman in a blue shirt and white jeans, smiling. 'Do let me in.' Her voice is so persuasive that Erica, still in her nightie, does so.

A week later she was on the dock, boarding the ship. She had a cabin to herself and there were indeed the genuine plans detailing the structure of the ship—where the 'tourist' decks, bars and pools were, and where the 'invisible' training rooms behind false walls were. But before she had time to look at them closely she was collected by a steward and escorted to the WE WELCOME U session.

Fifteen recruits were already seated before a large power point screen on which the letters NEO INTELLIGENCE appeared in gold. As soon as she sat down a man wearing a black suit and large paisley bow-tie entered and stood at the podium gazing blankly at the group. The recruits shifted uneasily as he seemed to be somewhere else for about three minutes.

Suddenly he burst into speech and rapidly pointed a red light baton around the room identifying each recruit by some detail: 'you have dandruff on your collar; you have one chipped fingernail; you have a mosquito bite on your earlobe; you have a nervous tic in your right knee and you have...and you have...'

A tremor of surprise ran through the recruits as the tiny red light bounced over their bodies.

'That little demonstration, my friends,' said the man, 'was the open-eyed stare. It has been developed by EVOL for the 21st century spy. No more skulking around corners with hats pulled down over squinting eyes. You will graduate with the Open-eyed Stares Neo Intelligence Look.'

The man, who still had not introduced himself, left the room. He was replaced immediately by Trisha.

'Hi there people. Well, that was your introduction to the course which will start in earnest in half an hour. It's time for a quick leisure break: a refreshing jet-juice, and your first game of Surveillance Bingo.'

Erica heard her stomach murmur. She closed her blank notebook and followed last out of the room. The recruit in front of her had a very slight stain on his jacket, she noticed.

Adapted for performance by Barbara Campbell from a story by Loma Bridge.