

Blackwater Eyes Afghan Contractor Surge

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Virginian-Pilot

As the United States builds up its military presence in Afghanistan, private contractors are flocking there in even greater numbers. And Xe, the company formerly known as Blackwater, is in the hunt to get a share of the new work.

According to a report last week from the Congressional Research Service, there were about 64,000 uniformed U.S. troops in Afghanistan in September and 104,101 military contractors -- 62 percent of the Defense Department work force there.

The Obama administration's planned deployment of 30,000 more troops in the coming months could require as many as 56,000 more contractors, the report estimated.

Xe, the Moyock, N.C.-based private military company, is already on the ground in Afghanistan despite its controversial history in Iraq, and is in the running for additional contracts.

A company executive faced skeptical questioning Friday at a hearing of the Commission on Wartime Contracting, a bipartisan fact-finding panel created by Congress.

Fred Roitz, executive vice president, told the commission that Xe has security and training contracts in Afghanistan. Among other duties, he said, the company trains and mentors the Afghan border police, teaching such things as rifle skills, arrest procedures and narcotics interdiction.

Xe also is one of five pre-qualified companies competing for a new Defense Department contract to train the Afghan national police.

Commissioner Charles Tiefer, a Democratic appointee, asked Roitz whether Xe has provided the Pentagon with a full accounting of its performance under the State Department diplomatic security contract it held in Iraq from 2004 until this year.

Yes, Roitz responded: "Our past performance was generally good on that contract.

"We did have some issues a few years ago," he conceded.

Tiefer pressed, Did Xe include an accounting of the shooting incident in Baghdad's Nisoor Square in September 2007 in which 17 Iraqi civilians died, prompting the Iraqi government to refuse the company an operating license?

Roitz did not respond directly but cited a State Department report on the incident which he said found "lessons learned" and concluded that while individual guards may have been culpable, the company was not at fault.

Five former Blackwater guards are scheduled for trial in February on manslaughter charges stemming from the Nisoor Square incident. The company faces multiple civil suits filed on behalf of more than 60 Iraqis killed or wounded in that and other incidents.

Even though the company has lost its big Iraq security contract, it still has more than 2,000 contractors deployed worldwide, Roitz said.

The police training contract for which Xe is in the running had been run by the State Department but is being shifted to the Defense Department's Counter-Narcoterrorism Technology Program Office.

Falls Church-based DynCorp International, which has held the contract since 2003, is barred from bidding on it now because it is not one of that office's pre-qualified bidders. DynCorp has filed a protest, asking that the contract be opened up to full competition.

DynCorp was paid \$118 million under the contract for the six months ended Oct. 2.

Commission Co-Chairman Christopher Shays, a former Republican congressman from Connecticut, said contractors play a vital role that is likely to grow as the U.S. buildup in Afghanistan goes forward.

One question that still needs to be answered, he said, is whether it is appropriate for contractors to be training the war-torn nation's armed forces.

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[stewamart](#)

Dec 21, 2009 4:26:48 AM

Given Blackwater/Xe's troubled Contract History, why are they still in the running for some of these lucrative contracts? More importantly, we should be looking at ways to decrease our dependence on Contractors, although that is unlikely to happen.

[20032680](#)

Dec 21, 2009 5:39:07 AM

Blackwater and other contractors in Afghanistan. What could possibly go wrong?!

[Mournblade1](#)

Dec 21, 2009 6:04:06 AM

these guys are clowns , i had the misfortune to dealing with these cowboys in iraq.

[ErnestPayne](#)

Dec 21, 2009 6:20:29 AM

Good God. As Wellington said of the returning French Emigrees in 1814 (and it applies here) they have learned nothing and forgotten nothing.

[guin338](#)

Dec 21, 2009 6:53:03 AM

Blackwater aka Xe should not be permitted to operate in an active conflict area, but if they do they should be under military control and not the department of state.
war for profit..what a concept!

[RHYN0506](#)

Dec 21, 2009 7:19:25 AM

its politics man, politics...

[stephenpm62](#)

Dec 21, 2009 7:47:10 AM

We need these guys...They do what needs to be done.

[av8tor366](#)

Dec 21, 2009 9:45:17 AM

Again, when the Clinton Administration drew down our Army, we paid for it (out-stretched Army) in fighting two fronts in AFG and Iraq, . Thank God for BlackWater, MPRI, DynCorps that fill the void created by the liberals,

[aeedwards](#)

Dec 21, 2009 11:04:36 AM

Guess they are looking for another country to be kicked out of.

[Roceye](#)

Dec 21, 2009 11:15:47 AM

yep...Blame it on the Clintons.

ya, that jerk got over 4000 guys killed in a needless war. Huh? oh that was George W. Bush.

short memory.

[8091885](#)

Dec 21, 2009 12:13:30 PM

If XE (Blackwater) does get a contract make them accountable as far as the ROE go and place them under the control of the US military. To be fair not all of them are cowboys but unfortunately there are alot in any security company. This is the price we pay with a downsized military. Alot of the operators that work for the various companies are former SF . They are used to working on their own. This is the biggest problem. They have to change their mindset which won't happen.

[anthonybauwens](#)

Dec 21, 2009 12:38:04 PM

Since there in a war torn country at war these contractors should be under military control I agree on that point..

[wtpworrier](#)

Dec 21, 2009 12:39:25 PM

"Tiefer pressed, Did Xe include an accounting of the shooting incident in Baghdad's Nisoor Square in September 2007 in which 17 Iraqi civilians died, prompting the Iraqi government to refuse the company an operating license?"

I'll bet he(this Xe guy)was thinking "DA-N!!! I thought they had forgot about that one". I hope they(Blackwater or XE)don't get a contract in Afghanistan or any place else the troops are stationed. These guys give the Military a bad name.

[USNDiver56](#)

Dec 21, 2009 1:03:35 PM

War for profit....well,thats what a "Soldier of Fortune" is, and again, a country that claims to be the most powerful in the world, allows these companies and these actions to continue, it shows, just what that country is made of, or better yet, what it's not made up of!. "We, need these guys...they need to do what needs to be done"...Mr,...you need to sit down and get a class of cold water and relax!. "Thank God for Blackwater,MPRI,DynCorps they fill the void left by the liberals"...hum,hum, if history is correct, when it came time for the "lets go to war vote", just about every one in Washington said lets go get these guys, and in so doing...every one has said..."Naw, we don't need a draft", why?...cause, we have the companies that will provide us with the "Soldiers of Fortune's", in other words, let's fight these war's on the cheap!...except, if your the President or a big shot in these companies. The long and the short of these "Army Companies is that they will and have blurred the legal lines of war, and they will cost this country more then we'll gain in the long run!". Plus, "ol..Buddy, gets killed, the company says..a telegram, with (3) S's in is what your family will get! (3, S's=Shipping Son Soon, and, oh, by the way, you (Mom, or Pop-the shipping costs are \$XXXX.xx) and, thats COD)). These companies are not required to do any thing other then pay a salary, sooooooooooooo, I guess, it beats unemployment...if you agree with that, "God Has to Bless You", for being so out of touch!

[CPL_0311](#)

Dec 21, 2009 10:12:27 PM

Simple, not enough soldier to do both the fighting and the training. So bring in the covilians to train and let the marines/soldiers/sailors/airmen do their thing. Or initiate a draft. Hmm, don't think that will happen in this political environment.

[rkgactical](#)

Dec 22, 2009 7:54:35 AM

stweamart,

If one were to use your analogy, why would we use our own military? We've had murderers, rapists, thieves, armed robbers, con men, child molesters, etc. Blackwater had that one incident that has and is being dealt with. I happen to know Erik Prince and many of the employees of Xe. They are professional individuals. They are mostly all prior elite of the military and police. Then they receive even additional training. What they are **NOT** are some third rate security guard watching some parking lot at a nightclub. If even a left wing liberal Socialist Democrat Administraion government as the likes of the Obama Administration approves of them, then by all means, they have fit the bill.

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