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This article is one of several being published by The New York Times, based on a trove of secret field reports from the battlegrounds of Iraq. The archive is the second such cache obtained by the independent group WikiLeaks and made available to several news organizations.

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Use of Contractors Added to

By JAMES GLANZ and ANDREW W. LEHREN
Published: October 23, 2010

The first shots sailed past Iraqi police officers took off in three squad cars, their lights flashi

It was early in the Iraq war, Dec. 22, 2004, an the shots came not from insurgents or crimin an American private security company named according to an incident report in an archive c classified military documents made public by

The company's convoy sped south in Umm Q Gulf. It shot out the tire of a civilian car that c minibus. The shooting stopped only after the military unit finally caught up with the convo

Somehow no one had been hurt, and the cont disciplinary action. They handed out cash to I

The documents sketch, in vivid detail, a critic the early days of the Iraq war, with all its Wik private contractor, wearing no uniform but fig disseminating intelligence and killing presum

There have been many abuses, including civili [government is working to ban many outside c](#)

The use of security contractors is expected to [report](#) by the [Commission on Wartime Contr](#) estimated that the State Department alone wo contractors it had protecting the American Er



Khalid Mohammed/Associated Press

In one of the most notorious episodes of the Iraq war, the charred bodies of American private contractors killed by an Iraqi mob were hung from a bridge over the Euphrates River in Falluja on March 31, 2004. [View the Slide Show »](#)

Contractors were necessary at the start of the war because there were not enough soldiers to do the job. In 2004, their presence descended into chaos, when [four contractors were](#) killed, mangled and charred.

Even now — with many contractors discrediting their accountability amply described in the documents they produced. There are [more contractors](#) over all than there were during the worsening war in Afghanistan.

The archive, which describes many episodes of the war, lists a multitude of shortcomings with this new system of contractors, coalition forces and Iraqi troops, and the engagement that binds the military, endangers themselves. The military was often outright humiliated, overpaid and, often, trigger-happy.

Contractors often shot with little discrimination at unarmed Iraqi civilians, Iraqi security forces, coalition contractors, stirring public outrage and underestimating the consequences of what they were sent to accomplish.

The mayhem cropped up around Iraq, notably in Falluja, which a small battle erupted involving three soldiers.

At a notoriously dangerous checkpoint on the highway, a cement truck entered a lane reserved for Department of Defense Global, a British company, fired a warning shot. An Iraqi opened the door and tried to flee, but a guard shot him and he dropped to the ground. Then members of a nearby militia also opened fire, shooting through the truck. DynCorp International, an American security contractor, was also present.

When the truck driver was finally questioned, he said he was a contractor who worked with yet a third company, KBR, the largest contractor in Iraq.

The conclusion drawn from this chaos was, “THE DOD LANE BY ACCIDENT.”

For all the contractors' bravado — Iraq was paid to protect them from being killed — and for all the debates about their necessity, the fact is that the contractors appeared notably ineffective in the war. They were paid to protect from being killed.

|

In fact, the documents seem to confirm a com those years in Iraq: far from providing insura identifiable, surprisingly vulnerable pickup tr companies were magnets for insurgents, milit search of a target.

Most of the documents are incident reports ar that have been made public, although even th of incidents involving contractors. During the 175 private security contractors were killed. T 53 died. Insurgents and other malefactors kid many of whom were later killed.

Aegis, a British security company, had the mo Most of those were Iraqi drivers, guards and c journalists and aid workers as well relied on c

The security contractors seemed overmatchec explosions their vehicles had no chance of wa two men who had worked with Custer Battles truck that was still burning on the road betwe an improvised explosive device and fired upoi

In July 2007, another report said, two were ki ArmorGroup, a British company, flew like a w flipping approximately six times, after a huge Iraq.

And in May 2009, three Americans, including [Falluja](#) when an I.E.D. overturned a vehicle es to a water treatment plant financed by the Un and American government statements at the t

Death came suddenly, from all sides, in all for

In late 2004 in Tikrit, seven men emerged fro Iraqi workers for Buckmaster, a company hire got out of a bus, a report said. The gunmen di killing 17 and wounding 20 as two Iraqis save bus.

There were suicide bombings, desert ambush wounds, as when a Ugandan guard working fc



Essam al-Sudani/Agence France-Presse — Getty Images

An armed private guard with Aegis, a British security company. In 2006, the year that the largest number private contractors died in Iraq, Aegis reported that more than 30 of its employees had been killed. Most of those were Iraqi drivers, guards and other Iraqi employees. [View the Slide Show »](#)





Mauricio Lima/Agence France-Presse — Getty Images

Dozens of Ugandans worked in Iraq for EOD Technology, an American company, in jobs that usually paid \$600 to \$1,000 a month. [View the Slide Show »](#)

shot and killed his South African supervisor a terminated, a report said.

A spokesman for EOD confirmed the incident unable to determine “why this particular guar

“I think the only elaboration on this incident i unfortunate event,” said the spokesman, Erik

In another case, in Baghdad in the summer of ArmorGroup was reported to have [shot and k](#) Australian, then run wild through the heavily escape. Finally, a coalition soldier tackled him directed-aimed warning shot into sand bags v suspect so that he could be brought under cor

The alleged killer, Daniel Fitzsimons, is still b under Iraqi law.

The contractors also suffered horrific traffic a Iraq, seemingly as a side effect of driving at hi appear at any moment.

The threats were not limited to insurgents, th contractors repeatedly came under fire from I often seemed unnerved by unmarked vehicles warning shots, or worse. Even as the war drag for the military to identify these quasi soldier:

To cope, the contractors were reduced to wavi inside their vehicles, the documents show — t being shot at by an American military guard t with Aegis first waved a British flag. When the said they were transporting a member of the / American flag instead. “THE TOWER KEPT S was injured in the episode.

But whatever the constellation of reasons — fi disregard for civilian lives — the security com shootings that the documents plainly label as reputation, even if it has not lessened the mili IED STRIKE A WITNESS REPORTS THE [BL](#) INDISCRIMINATELY AT THE SCENE,” read





Ali Youssef/Agence France-Presse - Getty Images

The remains of a car that was destroyed on Sept. 16, 2007, during shootings by Blackwater guards. The company is now known as Xe Services. [View the Slide Show »](#)

to the company, now known as Xe Services, th notorious for an apparently unprovoked killin

In a written statement last week, Xe said, “Wl on specific cases, we work closely with our go all investigations.”

In December 2004, just a few days after the c another Custer Battles convoy fired into the w military police soldiers in a patrol that was ap another road near Baghdad. The report noted did not stop their convoy until they reached a ADMITTED TO FIRING ON THE MP PTL,” t

Many of the companies apparently felt no sen Romanian company called Danubia Global ki report said, then refused to answer questions to provide information to investigators.

In 2007, a convoy operated by Unity Resourc approaching vehicle near the Green Zone in B President [Jalal Talabani](#) of Iraq and did not r contacted the American authorities, one repo

When asked about the incident last week, a U time of numerous suicide vehicle attacks, a ve was consistent with the behavior of a suicide : aimed warning shots” when the vehicle refuse company did not initially believe that anyone

Only when contacted by American investigato force member” had been struck by a ricochet, cooperated, Mr. LeBlanc said. After the invest cleared to immediately return to work.”

And still more recently, in July 2009, local co drove into a neighborhood in the northern cit setting off a firefight with an off-duty police o report said.

“It is assessed that this drunken group of indi firing their weapons,” the incident report con

In many other cases, contractors cited what they called “escalations of force” as an Iraqi vehicle moved toward them or other signs that the driver should stop. At the time, the vehicle’s engine block or through the windshield.

The Iraqis who were shot at, and who the documents do not surprisingly saw things differently. To judge by the dry, police-blotter language of some of the reports, they often had a similar perspective. That appears to be “escalations of force” by Blackwater in the year following the shooting, the documents show.

On May 14, 2005, an American unit “OBSERVED AND DESTROYED CIVILIAN VEHICLE,” killing a father and wounding a son, according to a report referring to a Blackwater protective security detail.

On May 2, 2006, witnesses said that an Iraqi man was struck by a roadside bomb and killed by “unauthorized forces,” another report noted. [Read the Document](#)

On Aug. 16, 2006, after being struck by an I.E.D. in the northbound lane, a report said. At least two other people were killed by Blackwater set off civilian demonstrations.

[Document »](#)

And so it went, up to the Sept. 16, 2007, [Nisour Square](#) shooting, which is again noted as an “escalation of force” in the documents, although in the report from which the Blackwater convoy charged in the name Skid Row.

The last reference to Custer Battles, which even appears in a [case](#) in which it was claimed that the company received invoices for the company’s work in Iraq, appears to be describing an I.E.D. strike on an exit ramp in which a contractor received shrapnel wounds in the face and chest by gunfire that broke out after the explosion at a hospital, ultimate fate unknown.

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