

USAWC STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP COURSE

PHASING OUT PRIVATE SECURITY CONTRACTORS IN IRAQ

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ABSTRACT

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Since the summer of 2003, private security companies have played an ever-increasing role in providing security in Iraq. Though they have been beneficial in filling a security gap, they may also be undermining the legitimacy of, and eventually threaten, the Iraqi government. For this reason, and due to the increasing capability of the Iraqis to provide for their own security, private security contractors should be phased out. This paper proposes a strategy to eliminate private security firms in Iraq and replace them with an Iraqi special security force.

PHASING OUT PRIVATE SECURITY CONTRACTORS IN IRAQ

Of course, nobody seriously recommends that the military be privatized.... If death and disaster on a considerable scale are inevitable products, the rule seems to be that this responsibility is the business of the government.

- David Sichor,
Punishment for Profit

Purpose – Provide a Strategy to Phase Out Private Security Contractors in Iraq

This paper proposes a strategy to eventually eliminate private security firms in Iraq and replace them with an Iraqi special security force. The paper outlines the scope of the problem, provides a solution, and makes recommendations for implementing a strategy to phase out private security contractors. This strategy supports the President's new *National Strategy for Victory in Iraq* in allowing the Iraqi government to assume more responsibility for the security of their country. This strategy will transfer the responsibility for the safety of reconstruction contractors operating in Iraq from private security companies to a new Iraqi special security force.¹

The Problem

The suicide car bomber detonated his device between the first and second vehicles of the convoy from the American Army Corps of Engineers. From the wreckage it looked as if nobody would get out alive — especially when they came under small-arms fire from gunmen at the side of the road. But the engineers did escape. Their British-trained escorts went into a well-rehearsed routine, getting the shattered armored vehicles through to a passing U.S. military patrol with only two of the escorts suffering broken arms. From the U.S. engineers' perspective, this was security money well spent.²

A mix of military forces, State Department security personnel, and private security providers, provide security for civilians and contractors in Iraq.³ As of December [2005], contracts to provide security for U.S. government agencies and reconstruction firms in Iraq had surpassed \$766 million, according to a recent Government Accountability Office report.⁴

The United States and our coalition partners may be unknowingly providing the basis for a future military insurgency, after we depart Iraq, by allowing private military firms (PMF), or private security contractors (PSC), or private security providers (PSP) to provide security in Iraq. After our departure, the potential exists for us to leave Iraq with paramilitary organizations that are well organized, financed, trained, and equipped. These organizations are primarily motivated by profit and only answer to an Iraqi government official with limited to no control over their actions. These factors potentially make private security contractors a destabilizing

influence in the future of Iraq. Estimates show that there are over 20,000 private security contractors operating in Iraq. These contractors do not generally compare to the security guard at the mall in Springfield, Maryland who is 65 years old, overweight, out of shape, dressed in black polyester, and armed with a 9 millimeter pistol and a flashlight. Security contractors in Iraq generally have military experience, are 30 to 35 years old, and are equipped with fully automatic rifles, long and close range combat optics, body armor, and armored vehicles.⁵

Private security contractors are the second largest military or paramilitary presence in Iraq, after the United States. These contractors are more than double in number of the United Kingdom soldiers stationed in Iraq, who as the second largest contingent of coalition combat troops, number approximately 8500.⁶ These private security firms are not only well equipped, they also have the ability to provide a robust combined arms force that could be supported by a limited joint service capability. P. W. Singer cites in his book, *Corporate Warriors*, a textbook example of how a private security firm can execute a precision military operation that allowed their customer, the government of Sierra Leone, to seize the initiative and ultimately defeat the rebels who were trying to gain control of the country. The excerpt below comes from Mr. Singer's book describing that example.

In 1995 in the former British colony of Sierra Leone, absolute anarchy reigned and the rebels were approaching within 20 kilometers of the Capitol. Certain hostile regime change was imminent and fears that the war would end in general massacre grew. The entire grim situation was reversed when the rebels were hit with precision air and artillery attacks that were followed up by rotary wing air assaults and attacks by mechanized infantry. All integrated and synchronized by a private military firm out of South Africa called, Executive Outcomes.⁷

Most of the public in the United States became aware that private security contractors were operating in Iraq when they heard or read of the four Blackwater employees being ambushed in Falluja. Their bodies were mutilated, and two of them hung from a bridge. What we have not read or heard much about are private security contractors conducting combined arms operations across the battlefields of Iraq. A recent example of the ability of a private security contractor to engage in combined arms operations was described in Fortune magazine as follows;

In many ways it was a textbook example of urban warfare. In April a group of well-armed Shia militia in the Iraqi city of Najaf attempted to storm the local Coalition Provisional Authority offices. The badly outnumbered defenders repulsed the attack during a 23-hour firefight, shooting off thousands of rounds of ammunition. When bullets ran low, they called in helicopters to drop off fresh supplies and ferry out the wounded. But in a critical way the battle in Najaf represents the new face of modern warfare: Most of the defenders were not

soldiers but civilian contractors—employees of Blackwater USA, a private security firm based in North Carolina. The guns, the ammo, and even the choppers all belonged to Blackwater.⁸

The Background – How Did We Get Into This Mess?

The United States Department of Defense (DOD), and other government agencies responsible for reconstruction efforts, greatly underestimated the threat from insurgents or terrorists during Iraqi post conflict operations. The security situation was becoming worse during the summer of 2003, and by August of that year, it was clear with the bombing of the United Nations complex that the emerging insurgency was now targeting nonmilitary targets.⁹ Anthony H. Cordesman recently published a document for the Center for Strategic and International Studies located in Washington D.C., titled *Iraq's Evolving Insurgency: The Nature of Attacks and Patterns and Cycles in the Conflict*. In this document he describes the background to the insurgency in Iraq as follows:

For all of 2003, and most of the first half of 2004, senior U.S. officials and officers did not act on a plan or respond effectively to the growing insurgency. They kept referring to the attackers as “terrorists,” kept issuing estimates that they could not number more than 5,000, and claimed they were a mixture of outside elements and diehard former regime loyalists (FRLs) that *[sic]* had little popular support. The U.S. largely ignored the previous warnings provided by Iraqi opinion polls, and claimed that its political, economic, and security efforts were either successful or would soon become so. In short, the U.S. failed to honestly assess the facts on the ground in a manner reminiscent of Vietnam. As late as July 2004, some senior members of the Bush Administration still seemed to live in a fantasyland in terms of their public announcements, perception of the growing Iraqi hostility to the use of coalition forces, and the size of the threat. Its spokesmen were still talking about a core insurgent force of only 5,000, when many coalition experts on the ground in Iraq saw the core as comprised of at least 12,000-16,000. They also ignored signs of Sunni versus Shi'ite tension, and growing ethnic tension in the north.¹⁰

This misread on the growing insurgency resulted in a gap between what security the coalition forces, limited by the number of troops on the ground, could provide, and the need for security to enable reconstruction. This gap was really the birth of the private security contractors in Iraq, and their use has grown at an almost out-of-control rate since 2003. Eben Barlow, the founder of Executive Outcomes once said, “The Cold War left a huge vacuum and I identified a niche in the market.”¹¹ The same can be said of what private security firms saw in Iraq, a vacuum or gap in the ability of the coalition forces to provide security for reconstruction and fight a war. That vacuum has now sucked in over 20,000 private security contractors in Iraq.

The Complex Operating Environment

Iraq can easily be described as a complex battle space where military forces, civilian U.S. government agencies, international organizations, contractors, non-governmental organizations (NGO) and the local populations all share the same ground. Added to that complex battle space is the private security company. U.S. Government Accounting Officer (GAO) Report 05-737 states:

While there is no mechanism in place to track the number of private security providers doing business in Iraq or the number of people working as private security employees, DOD estimates that there are at least 60 private security providers working in Iraq with perhaps as many as 25,000 employees. The providers may be U.S. or foreign companies and their staffs, likely drawn from various countries, including the United States, the United Kingdom, South Africa, Nepal, Sri Lanka, or Fiji, and may include Kurds and Arabs from Iraq.¹²

These contractors provide static security at housing areas and work sites, personal security for high-ranking officials, security escorts for government employees, contractors and others, and convoy security throughout Iraq.¹³ All are extremely important jobs, especially considering that coalition forces do not have the military assets to meet the increasing security requirements associated with the reconstruction efforts in Iraq.

The complex battle space in Iraq gets more complex each and every day with the addition of more private security companies. Private contractors involved in the reconstruction efforts in Iraq are generally on their own to provide security and have done so by using a myriad of private security contractors.¹⁴ The companies providing security for U.S. government agencies may be U.S. or foreign. Martin Smith, a correspondent for *PBS Frontline*, stated in an interview with Neal Conan of National Public Radio that:

There are a number of companies all the way from some pretty experienced reputable security companies like Blackwater Security and Erinys, but those are the big companies that get the multimillion-dollar contracts and there are a lot of ma-and-pa operations. A lot of money was put on the table when the war was over and there was a need for all these private security guards, and so there was something of a gold rush to get some of these jobs. But as to whom these guys are, the industry breaks it down in various tiers. At the top, you've got former Special Forces, Navy SEALs, Army Rangers and whatnot, and SAS [Special Air Service – equates to U.S. Special Forces] from other countries. South Africa has a lot there. And then you go down to retired policemen and then you go down a layer or two below that and you get to what the business calls tier bubba, and this is what they fear. When you have so much demand for private security guards, you're going to start using up the available pool of talent and so you end up with guys that maybe shouldn't be there.¹⁵

One of the major fallouts of this complex battle space is the number of “blue on white” incidents that are occurring in Iraq. A blue on white incident is a term that is used by both the

military and private security companies to describe an incident in which the military (blue) fires at a friendly private security contractor (white). When the term is reversed (white on blue), it describes the incident where a private security contractor fires on a military unit. Some private security contractors believe that they receive fire from the military without provocation due to new troops rotating to the region and not being familiar with the roles and missions of the private security contractors in supporting reconstruction efforts.¹⁶

According to private security companies operating in Iraq, these incidents (blue on white) are happening so frequently that the private security companies are not even bothering to submit incident reports with the Reconstruction Operations Center (ROC) which was organized to help coordinate efforts between the military and private contractors.¹⁷

In the 5 months (January to May, 2005) since the order was issued, the ROC has received reports on 20 blue on white incidents and the number of actual incidents is likely to be higher since, as we noted previously, some providers no longer report these types of incidents. Data on the number of incidents for the 5 months before the order was issued was not available because the ROC did not start collecting information on blue on white incidents until November 2004.¹⁸

The military forces believe that the main reason for these blue on white, or white on blue incidents is that military forces do not have command or control authority over private security contractors operating outside of U.S. controlled bases and camps. The reason the military does not have command and control over private security contractors is they do not have a contractual relationship with them. The relationship between the military and private security contractors is described as one of informal coordination. While this relationship has grown and evolved over time to form a more structured process, coordination between private security contractors and the military still remains voluntary, and relies more on the personal relationships between the contractors and the military than on rules, regulations, or more importantly, law.¹⁹

The growing presence of private security contractors operating in Iraq has also caused another problem – the shooting and intimidation of innocent Iraqi civilians. Recent shootings of Iraqi civilians, allegedly involving the legion of U.S., British, and other foreign security contractors operating in the country, are drawing increasing concern from Iraqi officials and U.S. commanders who say the private security companies undermine relations between foreign military forces and Iraqi civilians. Private security companies drive their distinctive sport-utility vehicles (SUVs) with heavily armed personnel in them up and down the highways and city streets in Iraq. The individual private security contractors wave their arms and point their rifles to clear traffic in their path in order to protect convoys they are escorting. Although these security companies are conducting some of the most dangerous jobs in the Iraq, their actions

have drawn criticism from senior military officers operating in Iraq. These actions have attracted the scrutiny of Washington after allegations of indiscriminate shootings and other recklessness have given rise to charges of inadequate oversight.²⁰ Brigadier General Karl R. Horst, Assistant Division Commander for Maneuver (ADC (M)) for the Army's Third Infantry Division (3ID), who was recently responsible for security in and around Baghdad, was frustrated with the private security contractors operating in his sectors of responsibility:

These guys run loose in this country and do stupid stuff. There's no authority over them, so you can't come down on them hard when they escalate force. They shoot people, and someone else has to deal with the aftermath. It happens all over the place.²¹

No official tally of such incidents has been made public. Aegis, a British security company that helps manage contractors in Baghdad, and maintains an operations center in the city's fortified Green Zone, declined to answer questions from the Washington Post in regards to shooting incidents.²²

The shootings became so frequent in Baghdad this summer that Horst [ADC (M) for 3ID] started keeping his own count in a white spiral notebook he uses to record daily events. Between May and July, he said, he tracked at least a dozen shootings of civilians by contractors, in which six Iraqis were killed and three wounded. The bloodiest case came on May 12 in the neighborhood of New Baghdad. A contractor opened fire on an approaching car, which then veered into a crowd.²³

In the rare instances when police reports are filed, the U.S. military is often blamed for the actions of private companies, according to Adnan Asadi, the deputy interior minister who now has responsibility (but little authority) for overseeing security companies. This leads to another problem as described by Brigadier General Horst, "People always say the Army did it, and even our police don't always know the difference." Two days after the 12 May incident mentioned above, American soldiers patrolling the same block were attacked with a roadside bomb. "Do you think that's an insurgent action? Hell no," Horst said. "That's someone paying us back because their people got killed. And we had absolutely nothing to do with it."²⁴ Adan Asadi supported Brigadier General Horst's explanation by stating that Iraqi civilians think private security guards are American soldiers because they generally look the same. The only difference that might be obvious to the common Iraqi is the vehicles used by the military, which are largely the High-Mobility Multipurpose Wheeled Vehicle (HMMWV or HUMMER), while the private security contractors primarily use American made Sport Utility Vehicles (SUV).²⁵

The Iraqi government is very limited in overseeing private security companies because Iraqi law does not apply to private security contractors. This is according to Nick Bicanic, who

produced a documentary called *Shadow Company* that portrays nation-states paying private companies to provide armed civilians, in lieu of soldiers, on an unprecedented scale. Mr. Bicanic stated further in his interview that Iraqi laws do not apply to private security companies and as a result, the private security contractor is not liable. As a result, when something happens, like a shooting, the person responsible is usually just removed from the country.²⁶ So in reality, the deputy interior minister has no authority to oversee the private security companies operating in his country.

No wonder the Iraqi citizens are irate when a shooting occurs. Take for example the personal account of Ali Ismael as he describes in detail the circumstance surrounding the time he was shot as he conducted his morning commute in Irbil, which is regarded as one of Iraq's safest cities.²⁷

Ali Ismael, his older brother Bayez and their driver had just pulled into traffic behind a convoy of four Chevrolet Suburbans, which police believe belonged to an American security contractor stationed nearby. The back door of the last vehicle swung open, the brothers said in interviews, and a man wearing sunglasses and a tan flak jacket leaned out and leveled his rifle.

"I thought he was just trying to scare us, like they usually do, to keep us back. But then he fired," said Ismael, 20. His scalp was still marked by a bald patch and four-inch purple scar from a bullet that grazed his head and left him bleeding in the back seat of his Toyota Land Cruiser.²⁸

The United States conducted an investigation of Mr. Ismael's shooting and concluded that no American contractors were responsible. While the U.S. investigation did not hold anyone accountable, the report did provide a working theory that the shooting came from insurgents executing an ambush on Mr. Ismael who is an official with the Kurdistan Democratic Party. This finding contrasts to other witness accounts of the shooting and local Iraqi politicians, who claim that it was private security contractors from DynCorp, who were securing the U.S. Agency for International Development. Mr. Abdullah Ali, director of the Irbil security police, called the U.S. report "three pages of lies to try to cover up that their company [DynCorp] was involved." Mr. Ali claimed that their investigation showed hair and blood towards the back of Mr. Ismael's Land Cruiser, which supports their claim that the shooting came from front.²⁹

Unfortunately, this type of incident is not uncommon in Iraq. Some contractors have said that they would rather be "tried by twelve than carried by six." This type of attitude can be directly attributed to the fact that private security companies and other contractors working in Iraq are frequent victims of violence. The most publicized incident came on March 31, 2004, when four employees of Blackwater were killed and their bodies dragged through the volatile

western city of Fallujah.³⁰ According to Ann Scott Thompson of *The Washington Post*, the number of private security contractors killed in Iraq stands at 240.³¹

The Improving Security Capabilities of Iraqi Security Forces – The Light at the End of the Tunnel

The light can be seen at the end of the tunnel regarding Iraqis being able to take on more responsibility for their security. Vice President Dick Cheney amplified this point in a recent speech when he stated:

Day after day, month after month, Iraqis have proven their determination to live in freedom, to chart their own destiny, and to defend their country. And they can know that the United States will keep our commitment to them.³²

Iraq's determination to defend itself is seen in the growing capability of the Iraqi military and police force. The Iraqi government, with significant help from the coalition, started rebuilding the Iraqi army in the summer of 2003 after Mr. Bremer, the U.S. Administrator of the Coalition Provisional Authority, disbanded it. Also at that time, there were only about 40,000 policemen scattered across the entire country.³³ A point has now been reached where reducing non-governmental security forces is feasible. In 2004, there were only a handful of combat-ready Iraqi battalions. Today there are well over 100 Iraqi combat battalions in the tactical fight, with eight operational division headquarters and 31 operational brigade headquarters. Twenty-eight battalions of special police are distributed around the country, providing a bridge between combat operations and civil police operations. Additionally, there are over 77,000 Iraqi police manning police stations across 18 provinces and patrolling the streets of Iraqi cities.³⁴

Another indicator of the Iraqi government's ability to take on more security responsibilities is U.S. troop deployments to Iraq have been adjusted downward. The change affects two Army brigades; the 1st Brigade, 1st Infantry Division based in Fort Riley, KS, and the 2nd Brigade, 1st Armored Division based in Baumholder, Germany and now in Kuwait. The 1st Brigade, 1st Infantry Division will not deploy as an intact brigade to Iraq. Some elements will be available to conduct other missions such as providing security forces and conducting training for the Iraqi Security Forces. The 2nd Brigade, 1st Armored Division will remain in Kuwait as a "call forward" force. The bottom line is that as Iraqi security capabilities increase, the number of U.S. combat brigades decreases. The latest reduction takes us from 17 combat brigades to 15, and with each reduction of a brigade, the light gets a little brighter at the end of the tunnel.³⁵

The Solution

The solution is clear; in order for the new Iraqi government to be recognized as a sovereign country, it must be responsible for every aspect of security in Iraq. With the recent

increase in Iraqi security capabilities, the overall ability of the new Iraqi government to provide all aspects of security – to include that of providing security for contractors operating as part of the reconstruction efforts in Iraq – is much improved. The increasing security capability shows Iraqi citizens' resolve for ensuring the security of their country, and also indicates the availability a large pool of potential labor from which to draw and form this new security force. While in 2003/2004 the strategy was not feasible due to a lack of qualified labor, today, this labor potential exists, and is expanding.

The strategy to support this solution is the elimination of all private security personnel. This includes private security personnel operating on Iraq's roadways for convoy security, private bodyguards, and static security operations conducted outside of United States government or coalition member controlled bases and camps. In short, all security requirements will become the responsibility of the new Iraqi government, with the only exception being security for companies that are in direct support of U.S. military or coalition member combat operations. The U.S. military or coalition members will maintain responsibility to provide security for companies involved in supporting combat operations, such as is presently provided by U.S. troops for Kellogg, Brown, and Root (KRB).

Three pillars provide the basis of the strategy; they are organization, command structure, and recruiting and equipping the force. First, the new Iraqi government must recognize, and agree to form and organize a new Iraqi security organization that is responsible for the specific mission of providing security for contractors involved in reconstruction efforts. This acceptance of security responsibilities is crucial to ensuring that present and future companies feel safe to invest their resources in Iraq.

The second pillar of the strategy is the command structure for the new Iraqi special security police force. Security forces must be subordinate and accountable to the Iraqi Minister of Interior. This type of command structure will limit or eliminate the possible use of these special security police as an unauthorized paramilitary organization for offensive engagements for personal or local political gains. Another benefit of having them answer to the Minister of Interior will be the increased ability to integrate the Iraqi special security police horizontally and vertically with all other security efforts of the new Iraqi government.

The third pillar of the strategy is recruiting and equipping the force. In order for the new security organization to be relevant, the special security police must be recruited, trained, and regulated by the new Iraqi government. The ranks of the special security force must be comprised of only legally born or naturalized Iraqi civilians. They must not include foreign-hired

contractors. This will ensure that the Iraqis, who have a national interest in security of their country, provide security, vice the mercenaries who do it today.

As the new Iraqi security forces are trained and equipped, they will replace private security contractors currently operating in Iraq. This phased approach is viable until all foreign private security contractors can be replaced. In the interim period, between the initial conception and full implementation of an Iraqi special security police, private security contractors will continue to operate under the direct supervision of the new Iraqi special security police for the term of their contract. This term must include a predetermined number of years to ensure a finite end date of the security contract.

The Recommendations - Making it Work

Phasing out private security contractors in Iraq has significant tactical risks that need to be mitigated for the strategy to be successful. The tactical risks can best be described as the difference between the ability of the new Iraqi special security force to protect companies involved in the Iraqi reconstruction, and the level of protection those same companies are currently receiving from their private security contractors. As mentioned above, the Iraqi government must fully commit to forming a new Iraqi special security police that will provide the same level of security that the contractors are getting from their own private security contractors.

It will take time to organize, train, and equip this new Iraqi special security force—most likely a year or more before the Iraqi government can start the recruiting effort with any success. This is due to the need to ensure only quality citizens are recruited for the special security force. Strict admission standards are required to ensure this quality. Recruits for this special program must meet, at a minimum, all of the following requirements: be a natural born or naturalized Iraqi citizen; have a minimum of one-year experience, in addition to basic training, in the new Iraqi military, Iraqi border security, or Iraqi law enforcement; and be honorably discharged from the organization. These requirements are similar to those required by reputable private security organizations operating in the United States and helps ensure that only the best recruits enter into this specialized program.³⁶

The U.S. military and coalition members must also agree to design a training program, and certify the Iraqi special security force as trained before they assume any security responsibilities. This certification provides assurance to the contractors involved in the reconstruction efforts that the new Iraqi special security forces are prepared for their role in providing security. With a single standard established by the coalition, actual training of the

force could be accomplished via contracts, with a maximum of three security firms currently operating in Iraq. A competitive bidding process, with strict screening criteria, is the best way to ensure a quality companies are selected at a competitive price. A minimum number of contracts allow the U.S. and coalition military forces to focus on a small number of primary trainers to ensure standardized training across the force. This type of standardization in training eliminates the variations in training standards as described below by Peter Almond of *The New York Times*.

Since 2003, the demand for private security guards in Iraq has been so great — from guarding oil pipelines to VIP protection — that many companies have started from scratch, and there are huge variations in the standards of recruitment and training. Hundreds of Iraqis have been killed or injured in what are usually described as defensive actions by private security guards as the specter of unaccountable mercenaries hangs over the country.³⁷

Based on the Blackwater training model, the training facilities will be able to produce approximately 150 Iraqi special security police officers, trained for a variety of private security missions, every eight weeks by each training contracting firm. If contracts are given to three training contracting firms, it will take over 133 training sessions, almost seven years, to match the almost 20,000 private security contractors operating in Iraq now. While this is not an overly aggressive replacement rate, it will allow the new Iraqi government ample time to phase out private security contractors in an orderly manner. If the Iraqi government wants to move this process at an accelerated rate, then the contractors responsible for training could use a model similar to that of the police-training program that DynCorp, a subsidiary of California-based Computer Sciences Corp., used to land the initial police-training contract in Iraq. In 2004, DynCorp contracted with the State Department to operate a training camp capable of handling 3,000 recruits, and 1,000 trainers and support staff, at any given time. The contract called for the camp to turn out 35,000 Iraqi police officers in just two years.³⁸ By all accounts, DynCorp was successful with this training program, making this a possible model to use if necessary.³⁹

The new Iraqi special security police will be equipped with standard Iraqi military issued equipment. While some special modifications to this equipment may be required in order to support specific mission requirements, the basic weapon will be that used by the Iraqi military and police forces. Since all recruits would have received extensive training on these weapons in their previous government service, this will reduce the need for weapons training and any “special logistics” requirements of the security force. To ensure that the new Iraqi special security police force is properly equipped and sustained, the U.S., as the largest financial contributor to the reconstruction efforts, should accept the responsibility for contracting,

purchasing, and fielding the equipment for the first 20,000 graduates. By taking on this responsibility, the United States will ensure equipping standardization across the security force thus making long-term sustainment of the equipment easier.

Conclusion

The primary reason the United States and our coalition partners are still in Iraq is to provide a secure and stable environment that allows Iraq to establish their version democracy. The United States and our coalition partners recognize Iraq as a sovereign country, and we respect Iraq's authority and ability to provide security within its borders. In order for this respect to have relevance, the United States and our coalition partners cannot continue to allow, and in some cases hire, private security companies to operate as independent paramilitary organizations. Third country nationals waving and firing weapons indiscriminately are of little value in providing long-term stability and security for Iraq. The United States does not allow private security companies to roam our countryside, point weapons in the faces of our citizens, and discharge their weapons indiscriminately - therefore we cannot allow these practices to continue in Iraq. If we do, we will continue to undermine the sovereignty of Iraq.

While there are tactical risks in phasing out private security contractors, the risks in doing nothing are much greater. Currently, there are no controls on how many private security companies or contractors operate in Iraq – today, tomorrow, or two years down the road. A solid strategy to phase out private security contractors and replace them with an Iraqi special security force, manned by Iraqis, expertly trained, well equipped, and answering only to the sovereign government of Iraq, will result in a much safer, more secure, and stable Iraq.

Endnotes

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² Peter Almond, "War's Fertile Grounds for Soldiers of Fortune," *The Sunday Times*, 30 October 2005, Business, p. 11.

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