

U.S. soldier makes. In Iraq, members of our military sometimes discover they are fighting side by side with a private contractor who is making up to \$1,000 per day doing the same work. That's demoralizing to our troops.

Private armies contribute to the increasing militarization of our whole society. They thrive on a Rambo-like mentality which encourages machismo, and glorifies the power to kill and destroy.

Finally, a private army becomes one more war profiteer; a company that makes war for profit. As they grow in numbers and political power, they will lobby for more wars.

Sources: "Stop private army training in Illinois", Elgin Chicago Daily Herald, March 17, 2007 and <http://chicago.indymedia.org/newswire/display/76134/index.php>

ACTION

Write your legislators and tell them not to allow private armies in the United States. Tell them not to allow Blackwater to set up shop in Illinois.

To find contact info for your US Representative / Senators, enter your address at <http://www.visi.com/juan/congress/>

To find contact info for Illinois state representatives and senators, enter your address at <http://www.elections.il.gov/DistrictLocator/SelectSearchType.aspx>

Local contact:

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STOP PRIVATE ARMY TRAINING IN ILLINOIS

Blackwater USA has been in the news lately. It is a private army that has been hired by the Pentagon to participate in various aspects of the war in Iraq.

Now Blackwater is opening a training facility in northwest Illinois in a wooded area called "The Site" 150 miles west of Chicago near the town of Mount Carro.



Timeline of the Corporate Warriors

In 1996, Bill Clinton eliminated some of the legal obstacles faced by "corporate warriors" with executive orders intended to facilitate the drug war in Peru and Colombia. Jeremy Scahill reports that this was the year Eric Prince, a former Navy Seal, founded Blackwater "to fulfill the anticipated demand for government outsourcing."

The danger of these operations came to public attention in April of 2001, when a small plane carrying baptist missionaries was shot down under the guidance of US contractors in Iquitos, Peru. Investigations by congress and the CIA died with the rise of the Republican majority and the "War on terror". By 2003, Blackwater was in Chile recruiting former officers of the infamous dictator Pinochet, many of whom had been trained in torture at Fort Benning, Georgia.

On March 31, 2004 Blackwater became famous in the single act that may explain why we are still in Iraq this day. Four of their employees took a short cut through Fallujah the day after L. Paul Bremer had closed the only newspaper in the town: al Hawza, whose editorials opposed the US occupation and supported Shiite cleric Moqtada al-Sadr. The newspaper was important for more than ideological reasons: according to interviews by the New York Times, it was one of the few remaining employers in the town. Riots followed. The four contractors were dismembered and dragged through the streets. That day was the beginning of what is now called the "insurgency", and Blackwater Security continues to profit from it.

At present, there are more than 100,000 contractors in Iraq, and half of them are armed. They are exempt from the statistics and laws of the military. Many of them are hired through a new division within the Department of Commerce so that they do not even appear in the Defense Department Budget.

Now Blackwater has established themselves in Illinois, less than an hour from the Wisconsin border, where the former Speaker of the House, Dennis Hastert, has just purchased a 300 acre tract.

Stop Blackwater in Illinois

We citizens need to stop them. A central feature of any democracy is civilian control of the military. That's because in too many countries all over the globe, military forces have seized control of the government and used their lethal force against civilians to keep that control. Corporate control of an army takes military control out of

the hands of citizens.

A private army like Blackwater is a corporation whose allegiance is to its own bottom line. It does not answer to the citizens. It claims to be patriotic, perhaps sincerely, saying its goal is to fight the enemies of the United States. But it gives itself the right to decide who those enemies are.

Right now, you might agree with Blackwater. But in the future, in a time of civil unrest, terrorist attack or natural disaster, it might decide that you, or your neighbors, or your relatives are the enemy. It could become a local militia such as we see in Middle Eastern countries.

By that time, it may be very powerful not just militarily, but also politically.

That might sound like paranoid fear. But soldiers from Blackwater and other mercenary armies showed up in New Orleans immediately after Hurricane Katrina. They walked around like an occupying army, brandishing automatic weapons. They treated many flood victims like suspected criminals.

One reason private armies have become popular with U.S. government officials is that they can be deployed in secret. When private mercenaries die in battle in foreign countries. their deaths are not counted in the official records of U.S. troops killed abroad. Politicians don't have to face public scrutiny about these deaths. Foreign governments or corporations can hire these same private armies, too.

What kind of a future are we creating, if warfare throughout the world becomes privatized and secret?

We will end up footing the bill for it in our taxes, and we will pay other, less tangible prices. But we won't be informed or consulted.

Contractors for private armies get paid four or five times more than a