

Blackwater [Xe] Wins Piece of \$10 Billion Mercenary Deal

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Never mind the dead civilians. Forget about the [stolen guns](#). Get over the [murder arrests](#), the [fraud allegations](#), and the accusations of guards pumping themselves up with [steroids and cocaine](#). Through a “joint venture,” the notorious private-security firm Blackwater has won a piece of a five-year State Department contract worth up to \$10 billion, Danger Room has learned.

Apparently, there is no misdeed so big that it can keep guns-for-hire from working for the government. And this is despite a [2008 campaign pledge](#) from Secretary of State Hillary Clinton to ban the company from federal contracts.

Eight private security firms have won State’s giant Worldwide Protective Services contract, the big Foggy Bottom partnership to keep embassies and their inhabitants safe. Two of those firms are longtime State contract holders DynCorp and Triple Canopy. The others are newcomers to the big security contract: EOD Technology, SOC, Aegis Defense Services, Global Strategies Group, Torres International Services and International Development Solutions LLC.

Don’t see any of Blackwater’s myriad business names on there? That’s apparently by design.

Blackwater and the State Department tried their best to obscure their renewed relationship. As Danger Room reported Wednesday, [Blackwater did not appear on the vendors’ list](#) for Worldwide Protective Services. And the State Department confirms that the company, renamed Xe Services, didn’t actually submit its own independent bid.

Instead, they used a blandly named cut-out, “International Development Solutions,” to retain a toehold into State’s lucrative security business. No one who looks at [the official announcement of the contract award](#) would have any idea that firm is connected to Blackwater.

Blackwater’s “affiliate U.S. Training Center is part of International Development Solutions (IDS), a joint venture with [Kaseman](#),” according to an official State Department statement to Danger Room. “This joint venture was determined by the Department’s source-selection authority to be eligible for award.”

Last year, a Blackwater subdivision, the Blackwater Lodge and Training Center, [changed its name to U.S. Training Center](#). Senate Armed Services Committee chairman Carl Levin (D-Michigan) blasted Blackwater in February for [setting up shell companies in order to keep winning government security contracts](#) despite its infamy.

According to State’s statement, the contracting process for the new Worldwide Protective Services deal included a “review” to ensure that companies met “minimum criteria” for eligibility. “This review included a process to determine whether any offerors had been suspended or debarred from the award of federal contracts,” it said. Despite Blackwater guards killing [17 Iraqi civilians in Baghdad’s Nisour Square in 2007](#), killing [two Afghan civilians on a Kabul road in 2009](#), and

absconding with hundreds of unauthorized guns from a U.S. military weapons depot in Afghanistan [using the name of a South Park character](#), federal contracting authorities have never suspended or debarred Blackwater.

It's not yet clear what the U.S. Training Center-International Development Solutions-Kaseman "joint venture" will *do* for the State Department. Worldwide Protective Services is actually a bundle of contracts in one, each governing specific duties for a firm to handle in a given country. Only two of those component contracts have been awarded so far.

One of them is to guard the huge U.S. embassy in Baghdad. That's gone to [SOC](#), which has ousted Triple Canopy, the incumbent security provider (which will still be part of the overall Worldwide Protective Services deal). If SOC remains the contract holder in Baghdad for the full five years — there's an annual review — it stands to make nearly \$974 million.

But because that so-called "task order" is specifically for on-site security around the gates of the Baghdad embassy, it's not clear if SOC will also provide [the 6,000 to 7,000 security guards the State Department estimates it needs](#) to protect diplomats on the move around Iraq or its other outposts around the country. Last year, the Iraqi government [barred Blackwater from doing business in Iraq](#) in response to Nisour Square. But it's not clear whether this new "joint venture" is eligible to operate in Iraq.

The other task order issued under Worldwide Protective Services is to protect the U.S. Embassy in Kabul. That contract's gone to [EOD Technology](#), a global firm which has in the past guarded the British and Canadian embassies in the Afghan capital. And that means ArmorGroup North America — last seen with its guards taking [tequila shots out of each others' butts](#) and engaging in [extracurricular sex trafficking](#) — has lost a contract worth nearly \$274 million over five years.

According to a different statement from the Department of State, the new Worldwide Protective Services contract comes with new safeguards to prevent abuse. Those include mandatory cultural awareness training, the addition of interpreters on all protection missions, financial penalties for poor performance, and a formal ban on alcohol. (Yes — after years of alcohol-related contractor incidents.) Despite these new protections, the department still sees fit to continue business with the most infamous member of the private-security world.

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<http://www.wired.com/dangerroom/2010/10/exclusive-blackwater-wins-piece-of-10-billion-merc-deal/>

Cleaves Alternative News. <http://cleaves.lingama.net/news/story-2133.html>