CHAPTER 2

The Impact of the Department of Defense’s Use of Private Security Companies on US Operations in Iraq and Afghanistan

Introduction

In the initial stages of military operations in both Iraq and Afghanistan, the US military was the sole provider of safety and security. To achieve US military and political goals, the US government developed security strategies, which attempted to balance the application of military operations developed to achieve specific objectives and nonmilitary capacity-building initiatives designed to shape a functioning government. In both areas, military versus nonmilitary goals, the use of PMSCs, by both the US military and other US government agencies, became the norm.

In the 2005, the DoD sought to shape and influence the security environment within Iraq. To accomplish this mission, US military forces in Iraq followed a strategy “to develop the Iraqis’ capacity to secure their country while carrying out a campaign to defeat the terrorists and neutralize the insurgency” (Bush, 2005:2, 8; Solis et al., 2005:10). This strategy to improve the security environment in Iraq required the US military to not only conduct counterinsurgency operations, but also simultaneously develop and train the Iraqi security services to combat insurgents within their own country (Katzman, 2008:24–27; Dale, 2008b:27, 92–99; Gansler et al., 2007:2, 21–24; Kidwell, 2005:5, 65–66). Essential to achieve these goals was the deployment of additional troops dedicated to counterinsurgency portion of the strategy as well as trainers to develop and train the Iraqi security services (Katzman, 2009b:37; Christoff et al., 2008a:9–11, 18–19; Dale, 2008b:24, 61–62; Department of State, 2007).
The US military’s counterinsurgency effort emphasized the need to not only engage insurgent forces, but also control the terrain and population once the insurgents had been killed, captured, or retreated (Katzman, 2009b:37–38; Dale, 2008b:63–71; Christoff et al., 2008a:9–11, 18–19). In the portion of the US strategy, PSCs were engaged in providing security for reconstruction activities, while PMCs were tasked with providing those forces with a myriad of support activities, such as the movement of supplies, all manner of intelligence support, and the training of the Iraqi security forces (Solis et al., 2008b:1, 2008a:18; Pickup et al., 2007:1; Walker et al, 2007b:6). This latter point happened to have more significance to the overall Iraqi mission, since this effort, the training of Iraqi security forces, was the US method of strengthening Iraqi sovereignty, and a means of transitioning to Iraqis’ taking responsibility for the security and stability within Iraq and the eventual US exit from Iraq (Gilmore, 2009:1–2; Jentleson, 2008:3–4).

In Afghanistan, the security environment differed slightly. With the US military quickly toppling the Taliban government and its allies through OEF, a political power vacuum was created, requiring the US government to establish policies and a civil–military effort to maintain a safe and secure environment (St. Laurent et al., 2009:1–2; Katzman, 2008:6–7; Terrill, 2006:24–25; Van Evera, 2006:11–12; Serchuk, 2005:1–2). From 2001 through 2006, the Taliban, a defeated but not destroyed group, began operating as insurgents, fighting the international civil–military effort to rebuild Afghanistan (Phillips and Curtis, 2008:2–3, Kaplan and Bruno, 2008:4; Roggio, 2005:1–2).

To combat this threat, the US-led international effort evolved into two separate operations: Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF), which primarily focused on conducting counterterrorism/counterinsurgency operations; and ISAF, which concentrated on programs designed to stabilize the interim Afghan government, arrange humanitarian and reconstruction assistance, and modernize Afghanistan’s security sector (Ryan, 2009:10–12; Erdelatz, 2008:5–6; Towell et al., 2008:9–10; Daggett et al., 2008:14–15, 18–19; Elsea, 2007:13–14). It was in this environment that a myriad of PSCs entered into Afghanistan providing similar services to those in Iraq (del Prado, 2008:7; Taljaard, 2003:1; Howe, 1998:2–3). The OEF mission change, in 2006, created a rewarding market for PMCs due to the change in mission focus to include operations designed to integrate US–civilian–military missions, and the development, through a concentrated training effort, of a self-reliant Afghan National Security Forces (Johnson, 2009:4–5; Katzman, 2008:24–27; Gansler et al., 2007:2, 21–24).

**Private Security Companies Supporting US Operations**

In both Iraq and Afghanistan, a key component in enabling the US military in carrying out its initial mission of defeating hostile forces in Iraq and