

# Blackwater to return to Iraq?

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Most of the guards working for private US-based firm Blackwater will possibly return to Iraq despite its role in a massacre.

The guards will change their uniforms and work for Triple Canopy — another US firm — because Iraqi officials have refused to allow the continuation of Blackwater activities in the country, a report by *The New York Times* cited Iraqi and US private security officials as saying.

Blackwater guards have been involved in several violent incidents in which Iraqi civilians were killed. In 2007, the security firm made headlines when its employees opened fire on civilians in Baghdad and killed 17 people.

Triple Canopy has recently won a State Department contract to protect American diplomats working in Iraq.

The possibility of Blackwater guards returning to Iraq has sparked outrage. US officials, however, defend the employment of Blackwater personnel as a result of Triple Canopy's lack of qualified guards.

Critics say the guards may interpret the decision as a green light to do whatever they wish in Iraq with impunity and that they can disregard Iraqi laws.

According to the Times, it is yet unclear whether Blackwater will benefit from the contract. There is also speculation that Triple Canopy may hire as a subcontractor of Falcon Group.

The lawyers of the civilians killed in the 2007 carnage have already filed a lawsuit against Falcon Group, saying the company is affiliated to Blackwater. The notorious firm, however, denies having any relations with Falcon.

Triple Canopy spokesman Jayanti Menches has reportedly declined to comment on the subcontracting issue.

Blackwater guards have been trained to obey the firm's rules of engagement which have been summed up by one former Marine Corps colonel with Blackwater.

"No compassion for the locals who had to use the roads with the Blackwater vehicles or convoys, shoot if in doubt and keep driving, etc."

The State Department contract with Triple Canopy is worth \$977 million.

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