

## Blackwater-Xe in Somalia?

By [Timothy Bancroft-Hinchey](#)

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Reuters reports a spokesperson from the Islamist Al-Shabaab group in Somalia claiming that the US mercenary group Blackwater/Xe Services is in Somalia, is recruiting and is planning a series of spectacular terrorist attacks against civilians to discredit his movement in Mogadishu.

The spokesperson is Sheikh Ali Mohammed Rage of the Al-Shabaab group (The Youth), an Islamist faction fighting government forces in southern and central Somalia. In an interview with Reuters, he claimed that mercenaries from Blackwater (now called Xe Services) have started planning bomb plots in Mogadishu to discredit Al-Shabaab.

“US agencies are going to launch suicide bombings in public places in Mogadishu. They have tried it in Algeria, Pakistan and Afghanistan”. He added that the target will be the market of Bakara. The source apparently warned a meeting of tribal elders that Xe Services (formerly Blackwater) has entered Somalia and has already started recruiting operationals to carry out its attacks.

### Blackwater massacres

Five mercenaries from Blackwater were accused of murdering 17 Iraqi civilians in a massacre in Nisour Square, Baghdad in September 2007. The decision by US Federal judge Ricardo Urbina this month to set the accused free on the grounds that their constitutional rights had been violated (a former agreement by the Bush regime with the Iraqi Government, since revoked, had exempted US security personnel from prosecution) has caused outrage in Iraq, where Prime Minister Noori al-Maliki answered the news by claiming that Baghdad “rejects the decision by the US court to absolve the firm from the crime of murdering several citizens”. Labelling the decision as “unacceptable and unfair”, the Iraqi Government has stated that it will aid the families of the victims to bring other actions in US courts.

The five mercenaries were accused of 17 counts of murder, 20 counts of attempted murder and one count of violation of arms carrying laws. A sixth mercenary had pleaded guilty and had agreed to cooperate with the authorities.

In Afghanistan, 2 mercenaries employed by Blackwater have been formally accused of the murder of two Afghan civilians in 2009 in Kabul. Justin Cannon (27) from Texas and Christopher Drotleff, from Virginia are accused of 13 counts, including homicide, for which they could be sentenced to death.

## UN Human Rights experts demand justice

Human Rights experts from the UNO have requested that the United States of America bring the Blackwater mercenaries accused of the Baghdad massacre to justice, claiming that Baghdad and Washington should work together to solve the question.

Shaista Shameen, Chair of the independent group of experts in human rights from the UNO declared "We respect the independence of the US Justice system and its requirements for due process but we are concerned that the recent decision to reject the case against the Blackwater guards will lead to a situation in which nobody is held responsible for the serious human rights violations".

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