

Iraq urges Blackwater prosecution

By [Global Research](#)

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Iraq's government has called for guards from the US security firm Blackwater to be prosecuted for the shooting of 17 civilians in Baghdad last month.

(BBC) An official inquiry found the guards had not been attacked, as they had claimed, calling it a deliberate crime.

Blackwater has insisted its employees responded lawfully to an attack. The US embassy is conducting its own probe.

The incident has sparked controversy about foreign security contractors acting with impunity in Iraq.

The official Iraqi government investigation said the shooting killed six more people than the 11 who had previously been believed to have died.

The three-member panel led by Defence Minister Abdul Qader al-Obeidi is reported also to recommend that Blackwater pay compensation to the victims.

The company has not responded to the latest allegations, but has disputed previous accusations that its staff were the first to open fire during the incident.

Hold to account

"The investigation committee appointed by Prime Minister Nouri Maliki... has found that there was no evidence that the convoy of Blackwater came under fire directly or indirectly," spokesman Ali al-Dabbagh said.

"It was not hit even by a stone."

Mr Dabbagh said the Iraqi cabinet would look at the investigative committee's recommendations and "take legal steps to hold the company to account".

The committee found that 23 people had been wounded in the 16 September shooting, when Blackwater employees opened fire on civilians at al-Nisoor square in Baghdad.

The findings echo a US congressional investigation into Blackwater which reportedly describe the company's use of force as "excessive" and "pre-emptive".

Blackwater's founder Erik Prince has insisted his firm's personnel acted in self-defence after insurgents attacked the US diplomatic convoy they were protecting.

Blackwater is the main firm employed by the US state department to provide security for its staff and visiting officials and businessmen.

The state department has handed its inquiry into the shooting over to the FBI.

In the days following the incident, which caused widespread anger in Iraq, the interior ministry drafted legislation bring private security contractors under Iraqi law.

Armed guards contracted by US and other government agencies were granted immunity from prosecution in Iraq under an agreement dating from 2003.

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