

Mal-Nusur Square (Blackwater)

What Happened?

Private security companies have aided US Forces in Operation Iraqi Freedom since the summer of 2003. By December 2005, the US Government paid in excess of \$750 million to such firms. Further, private security contractors account for the second largest military presence in Iraq with approximately 8500 personnel. This case study addresses an incident that arose with one such contractor, Blackwater Worldwide.

On 16 September 2007, Blackwater employees escorted a convoy of US State Department vehicles to a meeting in western Baghdad. As the Blackwater convoy approached Nisour Square, a Kia sedan drove directly towards the convoy and disregarded a police officer's command to stop. According to Blackwater officials, the Blackwater team then fired warning shots followed by lethal force. In the ensuing fight, Iraqi policemen then opened fire on the Blackwater team. As a result, Blackwater operators then killed 17 Iraqi citizens.

The following day, the US State Department revoked Blackwater's license to operate in Iraq. Subsequent reports by the FBI and US Military argued that Blackwater's operators opened fire without provocation and used excessive force. A New York Times report identified a single individual for the majority of deaths in the engagement. The Blackwater operator had previously served in the US Army and as a member of the 3rd Infantry Division and Texas National Guard and was an Iraq War Veteran.

Questions to Discuss With Your Soldiers...

Should members of private security firms be held to the same standards of ethical conduct as U.S. Soldiers? Why or why not? To what extent should Army Values be preserved by previous U.S. Army soldiers who serve as members of private security firms?

What are legitimate private security firm responsibilities? For example, should offensive combat operations be performed by or augmented with private security firms or should firms be restricted to defensive, security, or support systems?

What are the consequences of private security firms, such as Blackwater, on combat operations? How do the actions of Blackwater impact U.S. Army soldiers in Iraq? How do the actions of Blackwater impact U.S. relations in other parts of the world?

As a leader or soldier in the U.S. military, what is your proper response when you see members of a private security firm act against Army Values? How should you react when you witness

members of a private security firm act immorally or illegally? How can you best uphold Army Values when working with private security firms?

What are the implications for the Army as a profession when contractors perform jobs typically conducted by soldiers?

How do you maintain your unit's values when soldiers interact with others that may not perform by the same rules and norms?

