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Mercenary Logic: 12 Dead in Kabul

By Paul Bentley
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The blowback for Canada's participation in the Western Wars of Imperialist Aggression hit dangerously close to home this week when a group of 12 Nepali migrants guarding the Canadian Embassy in Kabul were killed in a suicide blast. Prime Minister Trudeau dismissed the event as a "cowardly" terrorist act, and the media quickly buried the story without a thought about Canada's responsibilities for their murdered employees.

Now, one might ask, who really is the coward here? No doubt, the Taliban and ISIS, both of whom claimed responsibility for the attack, must take their share of the blame. But what if the point of contracting out security at the Embassy was to avoid responsibility for the consequences

of Canada's role in the invasion of Afghanistan? It is hard to imagine that the Nepali migrants themselves, rather than Canadian officials working safely inside the Embassy Compound, were the real target of the attack. And yet, neither the Government of Canada nor the *CBC* called it an "attack on the Canadian Embassy". Rather, Trudeau referred to it as an "attack on security workers".

The contracting-out of security by the Embassy in Kabul not only shielded the Government of Canada's reputation, it also protected against any financial liability for such easily foreseeable deaths. According to the *Himalayan Times*, "Since the deceased were hired by the British firm Sabre International, the Canadian mission will have a very limited liability in this incident".

As if this were not bad enough, it turns out that Sabre International Security Ltd is associated with the notorious Iraqi military contractor, Namir El-Akabi, who is named in the *Panama Papers* as a shareholder in the company. El-Akabi first appeared in the international media as a successful Iraqi entrepreneur who built a business empire servicing the needs of the US army in the reconstruction of Iraq. The *New York Times* hailed him as the "Hot Money Cowboy of Baghdad" who "packs a pistol and a cell phone". Unfortunately, the glow may be wearing off El-Akabi because of his association in the *Panama Papers* with a myriad of companies under the guise of which, presumably, a fortune made off the war in Iraq has been sheltered – Sabre, Almco, Fiafi Group Ltd etc..

In addition, Sabre has drawn some negative publicity because of its association with the neo-colonial recruitment of ex-combatant youth, or former "child soldiers", from Sierra Leone and Uganda, to serve as security guards in Iraq and Afghanistan. While the employment opportunities afforded by such jobs has been welcomed by the Governments of these African countries, the concern is that such recruitment perpetuates the trauma these men once experienced and their reliance on an environment of violence.

According to the *Guardian*, as was obviously the case with the dead "gurkhas" in Kabul, Nepal is another impoverished country which has served as fertile ground for neo-colonial recruiting. James Ellery, a former brigadier in the British army and director of Aegis Defence Services between 2005 and 2015, told the *Guardian*, "You probably would have a better force if you recruited entirely from the Midlands of England, but it can't be afforded. So you go from the Midlands of England to the Nepalese, and then at some point you say I'm afraid all we can afford now is Africans." Aegis is chaired by Sir Nicholas Soames, a Tory MP in Britain and Winston Churchill's grandson!

Now, according to *Bloomberg*, there are linkages between Aegis and Sabre, "Sabre International, is a company founded by Thomas "Frank" McDonald, a veteran of the British Special Forces and mega-contractor Aegis Defence Services". The *Daily Sabah* reports that Danish expert, Maya Mynster Christensen, observed both Aegis and Sabre involved in the recruitment of former child soldiers in Africa, "two UK-based contracting companies were operating in Sierra Leone over a three year period – Sabre International ran a training camp in Sierra Leone in 2009, while Aegis Defence Services Ltd was recruiting men when she visited in 2012". It should be pointed out that Aegis was recently taken over by GardaWorld, a Canadian security company. All in all, we can see that the private security business is a very close-knit group, and for good reason.

This leads us to the question of why the Government of Canada would get itself involved in the murky world of mercenary soldiers. Is it that they were just not aware? Surely, they cannot claim to be overlooking opportunities for Canadian soldiers or police in order to provide jobs for the unemployed of poverty-stricken third world countries? No, the problem with using Canadian security guards is more likely that they might get killed. It is better that a Nepali migrant die than one of our own. The Nepalese are politically dispensable and cheap!

As usual, it is the poor people of the south who suffer most from the icy logic; the cold calculation of interests; followed by the rich people of the north.