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US Mercenaries Set Sights on Haiti

By Jeremy Scahill

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We saw this type of Iraq-style disaster profiteering in New Orleans, and you can expect to see a lot more of this in Haiti over the coming days, weeks and months. Private security companies are seeing big dollar signs in Haiti thanks in no small part to the media hype about "looters." After Katrina, the number of private security companies registered (and unregistered) multiplied overnight. Banks, wealthy individuals, the US government all hired private security. I even [encountered](#) Israeli mercenaries operating an armed checkpoint outside of an elite gated community in New Orleans. They worked for a company called Instinctive Shooting International. (That is not a joke).

Now, it is kicking into full gear in Haiti.

The Orwellian-named mercenary trade group International Peace Operations Association didn't waste much time in offering the "services" of its member companies to swoop down on Haiti for some old-fashioned "humanitarian assistance" in the form of disaster profiteering. Within hours of the massive earthquake in Haiti, the IPOA created a special [webpage](#) for prospective clients, saying: "In the wake of the tragic events in Haiti, a number of IPOA's member companies are available and prepared to provide a wide variety of critical relief services to the earthquake's victims."

While some of the companies specialize in rapid housing construction, emergency relief shelters and transportation, others are private security companies that operate in Iraq and Afghanistan,

such as [Triple Canopy](#), the company that took over Blackwater's massive State Department contract in Iraq. For years, Blackwater played a major role in IPOA until it left the group following the 2007 Nisour Square massacre.

In 2005, while still a leading member of IPOA, Blackwater's owner Erik Prince [deployed](#) his forces in New Orleans in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. Far from some sort of generous gift to the suffering people of the US gulf, Blackwater raked in some \$70 million in Homeland Security contracts that began with a massive no-bid contract to provide protective services for FEMA. Blackwater billed US taxpayers \$950 per man per day.

The current US program under which armed security companies work for the State Department in Iraq--the Worldwide Personal Protection Program--has its roots in Haiti during the Clinton administration. In 1994, private US forces, such as DynCorp, became a staple of US operations in the country following the overthrow of Jean-Bertrand Aristide by CIA-backed death squads. When President Bush invaded Iraq, his administration radically expanded that program and turned it into the privatized paramilitary force it is today. At the time of his overthrow in 2004, Aristide was being [protected](#) by a San Francisco-based private security firm, the Steele Foundation.

Beyond the establishment mercenary industry's activities in Haiti, look for more stories like this one:

On January 15, a Florida-based company called All Pro Legal Investigations registered the URL [Haiti-Security.com](#). It is basically a copy of the company's existing US website but is now targeted for business in Haiti, claiming the "purpose of this site is to assure construction and reconstruction companies considering a Haiti project that professional security is available."

"All Protection and Security has made a commitment to the Haitian community and will provide professional security against any threat to prosperity in Haiti," the site [proclaims](#). "Job sites and supply convoys will be protected against looters and vandals. Workers will be protected against gang violence and intimidation. The people of Haiti will recover, with the help of the good people from the world over."

The company boasts that it has run "Thousands of successful missions in Iraq and Afghanistan." As for its personnel, "Each and every member of our team is a former Law Enforcement Officer or former Military service member," the site [claims](#). "If Operator experience, training and qualifications matter, choose All Protection and Security for your high-threat Haiti security needs."

Among the [services](#) offered are: "High Threat terminations," dealing with "worker unrest," armed guards and "Armed Cargo Escorts." Oh, and apparently they are currently hiring.

What is unfolding in Haiti seems to be part of what Naomi Klein has labeled the "Shock Doctrine." Indeed, on the Heritage Foundation blog, opportunity was being found in the crisis with a [post](#) titled: "Amidst the Suffering, Crisis in Haiti Offers Opportunities to the U.S." "In addition to providing immediate humanitarian assistance, the U.S. response to the tragic

earthquake in Haiti earthquake offers opportunities to re-shape Haiti's long-dysfunctional government and economy as well as to improve the public image of the United States in the region," wrote Heritage fellow Jim Roberts in a post that was subsequently altered to tone down the shock-doctrine language. The title was later [changed](#) to: "Things to Remember While Helping Haiti" and the wording changed to "In addition to providing immediate humanitarian assistance, the U.S. response to the tragic earthquake in Haiti should address long-held concerns over the fragile political environment that exists in the region."