

## **DISEC: Topic 2**

### **Private Militaries**

Conflict is almost unavoidable. Whether in the form of war or just local authorities, there shall always be a need for a group to possess weapons in order to maintain the peace. Because conflicts exist all over the world, military efforts are often in need of a little extra manpower. This is where private military companies (PMC) come in to fill in the gaps. For short term solutions, PMCs can be one way of providing military support and training without direct intervention by another country. Even the UN has enlisted the aid of PMCs for peacekeeping missions. Of course, there are many consequences of utilizing PMCs over state militaries.

PMCs, unlike state militaries, are not as readily accountable for their actions. Somalia's Puntland Maritime Police Force, for example, is criticized for operating outside both the Somali Constitution as well as the purpose that it was designed for, which is mitigating piracy in Somalia. Some PMCs even go so far as to have a penchant for disregarding international policies, embargoes and/or human rights. For example, the Blackwater employees in Iraq in 2004, under a US contract, conducted nighttime raids to look for terrorists and in doing so they mistreated, tortured and even killed civilians. They were later murdered by the Iraqi people. Had the locals not responded, the Blackwater employees would likely not have answered for the blatant human rights violations they conducted due to the secrecy of contracts and of the way classified information is handled by PMCs and state governments. Most of the punishment PMCs receive is being banned in a particular country. PMCs tend to be more active in developing countries; however, PMCs are more likely to have their headquarters in industrialized countries, which are also better equipped to regulate PMCs.

Other experts argue that PMCs actually weaken the capabilities of militaries that consistently rely on them for the presence of troops, information-gathering and logistics. By providing services for states, PMCs hold more power within a government, likely to promote and later profit from conflict. In fact, the only real drawback PMCs have during conflict is not getting a contract. Any backlash incurred by the actions of PMCs in one country, such as sentiments against another country, are usually directed toward the personnel of the country that hired the PMCs. Going back to the Blackwater employees, the Iraqi people began developing anti-*American* sentiments, not sentiments against PMCs. In the case of Somalia, which originates and ends domestically, the Somali people may begin feeling distrust toward President Farole, which could lead to the de-legitimizing of the Somali government.

**Questions to Consider:**

- 1) How can there exist greater accountability for PMCs?
- 2) What sorts of incentives or punishments should PMCs and/or governments have for human rights violations incurred as a result of a contract?
- 3) How should countries respond to government officials wanting PMCs for personal protection? If this protection is allowed, what sorts of protocols should be established?

**Sources:**

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