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Employees not convinced whistle-blowers are safe

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By **TOD ROBBERSON** / The Dallas Morning News

The experience of two DynCorp workers who served in Kosovo and Bosnia in 2001 underscores employees' ongoing complaints about a low tolerance for complainers and whistle-blowers at the company.

The company's recent efforts to encourage whistle-blowers, which includes establishment of an anonymous telephone hotline, have failed to convince employees that they can speak openly without fear of losing their jobs, said several DynCorp staffers.

Ben Johnston of Austin and Kathryn Bolkovac, now a resident of New Mexico, discovered in 2001 that their colleagues were visiting brothels, aiding in human trafficking and paying for sex with girls as young as 15. A videotape depicting an apparent rape also surfaced, but no prosecutions followed.

After Mr. Johnston complained, DynCorp fired him for what he described as bringing "discredit" to the company. He sued and ultimately reached an undisclosed, out-of-court settlement with DynCorp.

DynCorp disputes allegations that the employees were fired for exposing the scandal. But it says employee contracts now include clauses requiring them to abide by the laws of the countries in which they serve.

Ms. Bolkovac also sued after being dismissed and won \$200,000 in a 2003 court ruling against the London-based DynCorp subsidiary that had employed her and Mr. Johnston. Ms. Bolkovac said she was particularly galled at the fact that DynCorp had hired American police officers to teach Bosnians how to instill law and order in their war-ravaged country, but instead, trainers broke the law with apparent impunity.

DynCorp argued in court that Ms. Bolkovac was fired not for whistle-blowing but for allegedly falsifying a time sheet. An employment tribunal in London rejected that argument, stating that "there is no doubt whatever" that she was fired for whistle-blowing. A separate Defense Department inquiry affirmed the whistleblowers' allegations.

"I thought I was working with the cream of the crop, but in reality, this is the bottom of the barrel," Ms. Bolkovac said. Asked if she believed DynCorp's current assertions that it has rooted out offenders, tightened recruitment procedures and changed its ways, Ms. Bolkovac responded, "I sincerely doubt it."

She cited newspaper reports this summer that DynCorp's contract for biometric identification badges inside the Baghdad green zone was in jeopardy after an employee was discovered giving away the badges to his girlfriend and her relatives.

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